



Native Plant Seed Collection

Collecting native plant seeds is a great way to expand and share the bounty of your habitat garden! Sowing seeds you collect saves money and helps prevent the spread of disease or invasive species (*including jumping worms!*).

Always ask permission to collect from land not your own.

Take no more than 1/3 of the seed of one plant and never use more than 1/3 of the plants at a site. This ensures genetic diversity and that you leave plenty of seed for wildlife and self sowing on the site. And never collect seeds from rare or endangered species.

Scout out plants when they're flowering to be sure what species you will be collecting:

- take pictures and make notes throughout the season
- consult resources like minnesotawildflowers.info or other native plant identification guides for your region

Seeds are usually ripe about 4-6 weeks after flowering when:

- they fall easily from the plant
- pods lose their green color and turn brown
- the stem holding the seed head is brown and dry
- the seed capsule opens
- ripe seeds are plump, hard and usually brown or black; unripe seeds are still soft and green.



Photo by Vicki Bonk

Milkweed (*Asclepias* spp) seedpods are easy to identify and sow, but you can collect seed from most native wildflowers, grasses, trees & shrubs!

What about all that fluffy stuff?

You can [winter sow native seeds](#) without removing all of the chaff and pappus (fluff).

Just make sure the seed materials are kept dry, cool and out of direct sunlight until you're ready to sow (either directly on the ground, in the snow or in containers outdoors).

Also see Xerces Society's [Collecting and Using Your Own Wildflower Seed](#)

Collecting and bagging:

- Select seed heads with stems long enough to bundle together. *Don't collect seeds or stems from the ground, as decay may have started.*
- Place those with dry, easily scattered stems/ seeds into paper bags right in the field.
- To speed drying, remove leaves from stems with a quick stripping motion. And don't worry if you miss a few!
- Suspend bags or thick stems in an unheated room out of direct sunlight.
- Label each variety with common and *botanical* names, along with when and where collected.
- To minimize seed loss, put all but the thickest stalks head-down into a paper bag.



Storing:

- Check regularly for dryness and rodent damage.
- Rotate the larger, thicker stalks.
- When they are dry enough, separate seeds from plant parts and transfer to labeled glass jars.
- Store jars away from areas with fluctuating temperatures, but where you will remember to visually check for moisture.
- Do not refrigerate or mix with sand until you decide which [stratification](#) / propagation method and time table to use.

See our website — wildonestwincities.org — for other information sheets, and to watch our September 2022 program by Vanessa Van Alstine — “All About Seed Saving”