

## Propagation by Seed (Rebecca's Methods)

### Materials needed

- **Pots.** I sow most things in 4 inch pots. Exceptions are shrubs, trees and bulbs which go in deep pots
- **Potting soil.** I use Foxfarm Ocean Forest because it is light and well draining, but any good potting soil will do.
- **Grit.** I use Cherrystone Poultry Grit #2 from Wilco. Make sure your grit contains no salt.

### My general sowing method

Fill your pot with a well draining potting soil. Moisten soil and tamp down to remove air spaces.

Sprinkle seeds on surface. Unless they require light to germinate, cover them with a fine grit.

Place outside in a sheltered place. You may need to protect your pots with screen to keep the birds out.

### Conditions needed by some seeds to sprout

- **Cold stratification**—some seeds need to be cold (around 40°F) and moist for a few months before they will sprout.
- **Warm stratification**—some seeds need a prolonged period of warm moisture
- **Alternating**—cold, warm alternating
- **Scarification**—seed needs to be mechanically damaged in order for moisture to penetrate enough to trigger germination
- **Light**—some seeds need light and will not sprout if covered deeply
- **Dark**—some need to be covered well in order to sprout

### Sowing Techniques

#### Sowing Outside (using nature to provide stratification)

Place outside in a sheltered place. Let nature care for them through the winter and they should sprout in spring. If it is a very dry winter check on them periodically to make sure they are moist. If it is very warm, some seeds may not get enough cold time to germinate.

## **Cold Stratification in Refrigerator**

Put a spoonful of vermiculite in a cheap sandwich bag. Add seeds and a dated label. Moisten the vermiculite to the point that it just starts to clump together.

Put in fridge for about 8 weeks. Check on it every other week as many seeds will sprout in fridge. If they do, go ahead and sow them and place outside in sheltered location. Otherwise take out in 8 weeks (or after allotted time) and sow. You can do this over winter (November-January) to simulate a cold winter if your area is too warm to reliably cold stratify.

You can also use this method to trick some plants into sprouting in the fall so that you have a chance to plant them out in winter or early spring. Place seed in fridge for July, August or September and take out when weather cools. Many plants will start sprouting and you may have seedlings big enough to plant out before spring. I use this method a lot.

## **How do you know what your seeds need?**

A list of resources is below. If you are not sure what your seed needs, the safest/easiest approach for me is often the natural outdoor method. But this does usually require growing seedlings on for a summer in their pots. If you have enough seed to experiment with, try cold stratification and the outdoor method and see which works best. More resources are available on the website: <https://sierrarockgardensociety.org/propagation-resources/>

## **Online Resources**

**Alplains Nursery** [www.alplains.com/](http://www.alplains.com/)

Alplains is run by Alan Bradshaw in Colorado. In addition to providing a great seed catalogue containing many western natives, his site is also a great resource for germination requirements of many plants.

## **Google**

It is becoming very easy to find detailed propagation online through Google, thanks to detailed databases by agencies like USDA and university departments.

## **Books**

**Seed Propagation Of Native California Plants By Dara Emery**

This is an indispensable book for those interested in growing native California plants from seed. Dara discusses numerous strategies for seed propagation and then offers a very extensive list of many native California plants with recommended seed treatment for each species.