



Propagate your own native plants

Germinating seed

Many native plant species can be grown from seed with little or no effort. Always ensure seeds collected are fresh, mature, insect free and disease free. Ensure the fruiting body has dried fully, and the seeds have been completely released from it.

Seeds requiring no special pre-sowing treatment include *Kardomia* spp, *Babingtonia* spp, *Eucalyptus* spp (gum trees), *Melaleuca* spp, *Kunzea* spp (pictured), *Leptospermum* spp (tea trees), *Plectranthus* spp and *Viola* spp (native violets).

Some seeds require a **breach in the seed coat** before moisture can penetrate and germination commences. There are several ways to cause this breach in the seed coat mechanically.

Some seeds may require **abrasion of the seed coat** by rubbing the seed between two pieces of sandpaper. After the abrasion process, place the seed in a heatproof container and pour boiling water on them. Allow them to stand overnight prior to potting up the next day.

The species of plants that respond well to this method include seeds of *Acacia* spp (wattles) and the pea family including *Glycine* spp, *Cassia* spp, *Hardenbergia* spp, *Hovea* spp (pictured), *Kennedia* spp, *Mirbelia* spp, *Oxylobium* spp, and *Pultenaea* spp.

If this treatment is unsuccessful, try cutting through the seed coat with a knife before soaking in cold water.

Some seeds such as *Banksia* spp and *Hakea* spp require **release from a woody capsule**. Place them in a paper bag or envelope and put in the oven on a very low heat. Check constantly to see if the woody capsule has released its seeds and remove immediately from the oven.

Sprinkle a small amount of seed on the surface of a free draining seed mix in a punnet or seed tray. A free draining seed mix can be equal parts coarse river sand and vermiculite. Cover lightly with sifted sand so that the seed is buried to a depth about equal to its thickness. They should then germinate quite readily. Always remember to label your trays.

With some native plants it is sometimes best to sow the seed directly in the location where the plant is intended to grow, as natives do not like their roots disturbed unnecessarily.

Propagating by cuttings

Seeds which may be difficult to germinate include *Boronia* spp, *Correa* spp, *Eriostemon* spp, *Philotheca* spp (pictured), *Isopogon* spp, *Leucopogon* spp, *Persoonia* spp, *Petrophile* spp, *Phebalium* spp, *Leionema* spp and *Zieria* spp.

These species are best propagated from cuttings.

Take a piece approximately six inches (or 15 cm) long ensuring you have either a 'heel' or a 'node' at the end to be potted up. Remove leaves from the bottom half of the stem. Dip in a propagating hormone (powder or liquid), shake off the excess and pot up.

Remove any flowers or buds and reduce the leaf surface area by cutting any leaves present in half.



Other useful points to note

Native legumes such as wattles and pea flowers carry root nodules. Within these nodules, the bacterium *Rhizobium* fixes atmospheric nitrogen forming organic compounds which eventually become available for plants to take up. Ensure there are always some of these legumes in your garden.

If you are considering applying fertiliser, remember Granite and Traprock soils are 'infertile' only in the agricultural sense. To native species growing in these soils, a dramatic increase in fertility would be disastrous. Only use fertilisers specific for native plants.

Please remember that some species of native plants are rare and protected under the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. These species are not to be collected from the wild without a permit. You may prefer to purchase established plants. Check with your local nursery to see what plants are available; some nurseries have plant catalogues.

Granite and Traprock sands and sandy loams drain well but have a high evaporation rate. Newly planted shrubs and trees require regular watering during all seasons.



References

For native plants, contact your local plant nurseries, including:

- Mick's Natives, New England Highway, via Tenterfield NSW 2372, Ph: 02 6736 2420.
- Mole Station Native Nursery (wholesale only), Mole Station, via Tenterfield NSW 2372, Ph: 02 6737 5429, Web: www.molerivernursery.com

For more information contact:

- Sundown National Park, via Glenlyon Dam Road, MS 312, via Stanthorpe Qld 4380, Ph: 02 6737 5235.
- Girraween National Park, via Ballandean Qld 4383, Ph: 07 4684 5157.
- Stanthorpe Rare Wildflower Consortium, contact Liz Bourne, Ph: 07 4683 5374, Web: www.granitenet.com.au/groups/environment/rare-wildflower-consortium.
- www.southernmurray.com.au/page/Lifestyle_Community/Environmental_Management/Vegetation_Management/Rare_Wildflower_Consortium/.

Other references

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- Langkamp (Ed.), 1987, *Germination of Australian Native Plant Seed*, Inkata, Melbourne
- Ralph, M, 2003, *Growing Australian Native Plants from Seed - 2nd Edition*, Bushland Horticulture, Sydney.
- Stanley, TD, and Ross, EM, *Flora of South-eastern Queensland Vol 1 (1983), Vol 2 (1986) and Vol 3 (1989)*, Queensland DPI, Brisbane.
- Stewart, Doug and Robin, 1999, *From Seeds to Leaves*, Bookman Press, Melbourne.