

Seed Balls

Overview:

Seed balls are small bundles of seeds, clay, and soil or compost. Although seed balls have been around since ancient times, they were rediscovered in the 1930s by the Guerilla Gardening movement as a way to covertly introduce vegetation by simply tossing the seed balls (or, on a large scale, dropping them from an airplane). They are still used today to re-vegetate areas burned by wildfires. On a small scale, seed balls are fun to make and offer an inexpensive way to sow native plants and flowers.



Materials:

- Clay (available from craft stores)
- Compost or potting soil
- Seeds (easy-to-grow or native varieties)

Approximate Time to Complete: 30 minutes

Location: Indoor or outdoor

Ages: All ages

Season: Plant in spring, summer and fall

Instructions:

1. Divide your materials so you have:
 - 5 parts clay
 - 1 part compost/potting soil
 - 1 part seeds
2. Combine the clay and compost. Add a little water if your mixture is dry. The mixture should be moist but not dripping wet; similar to the consistency of cookie dough.
3. Add the seeds to the clay and compost. Thoroughly work the materials together with your hands.
4. Shape the mixture into balls about the size of a golf ball.
5. You can plant the seed balls while they're still moist, or allow them to air dry
6. Find areas in your yard and surrounding community that could use a little green. Toss or place your new treasures directly onto bare soil. As long as they are watered (either manually or by rain), the clay will break down and the seeds will grow.

Choose Your Seeds:

Wildflowers are good choice of seeds for seed balls because in nature they are self-planted and their seedlings are hardy, requiring little care. Seeds of native wildflowers work especially well because they are adapted for your climate, and they also provide a food source for local pollinators. (Choosing native wildflower species isn't a must,

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however. Non-native wildflowers, including red poppies, also work well in seed balls. Just be sure to avoid any plants that are invasive in your area.)

Some seed suggestions:

Cosmos – One of the easiest plants to grow from seed. Garden experts often say if you can't grow cosmos, you may want to try a different hobby.

Milkweed – Food for monarch caterpillars; use your seed balls to grow plants where these hardworking, migrating butterflies can lay their eggs.

Red poppies – A symbol of remembrance to honor fallen soldiers, red poppies are easy to grow and provide eye-catching splashes of color.

Coreopsis – Adaptable to a variety soil conditions and light levels, coreopsis plants are extremely drought tolerant once established.

Coneflower – A popular plant for butterflies and birds, purple coneflower is also extremely drought tolerant once established.

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