

Zilker Botanical Garden

Activity Guide – Making Seed Balls

Ages: All ages

Approximate Length: 30 minutes

Objective: Learn more about the importance of native plants and the environment by using seed balls to reseed your landscape.



Materials:

1. Wildflower seeds native to your area
2. Soil
3. Compost
4. Sand or clay
5. Water – preferably in a reusable squirt bottle
6. Aluminum foil
7. A tray or cookie sheet
8. Measuring spoons:
 - a. 1 tablespoon
 - b. ½ teaspoon

Concept Terms:

1. **Native Plants** – plants that naturally evolved in a specific area.
2. **Invasive Plants** – plants that have been relocated, either intentionally or unintentionally, into an area outside of their natural habitat. Invasive plants have the potential to crowd-out native plants and the wildlife that depend on them if left unmanaged in the wild.
3. **Seed Ball** – a ball made of earth and seeds used to replant areas where natural floras have been destroyed.

Background:

1. As human beings have spread out across the world, they have both accidentally and purposefully replaced some native plants in an area with plants from other areas. Sometimes these new plants might be better for crops or might look better aesthetically. Frequently, invasive species can take over areas of land that were precious habitats for native plants and disrupt the entire life-cycle for an entire area. Seeding more native plants and trying to control the spread of invasive species will help stabilize ecosystems and preserve biodiversity.
2. Seeds are awesome and come in all forms and sizes. Seeds as grain and rice are the ways that human beings get the majority of the calories they eat through food. Seeds come in all shapes and sizes, and seed balls are one of the best ways to ensure your seeds get the best possible start in life.
3. Before the development of seed balls as a concept, reseeding some natural areas with native plants was challenging. The traditional method of casting seed only leads some seeds to be sown on top of the soil where it may be baked dry by the sun, blown away by the wind, washed away by weather, or eaten by wildlife.
4. Seed balls protect the seeds from those dangers until they have a chance to take root and grow. The ball gives shade to conserve moisture and protect the seeds from wildlife. Once the seeds begin to germinate, the ball breaks apart and serves as a place for the root system to grow.

Instructions:

1. Use a 3-to-1 mixture of soil to your other dry components in general. For the purposes of this recipe, we'll use tablespoons.
2. Add 3 tablespoons of soil.
3. Add 1 tablespoon of compost.
4. Add 1 tablespoon of sand or clay.
5. Mix well
6. Add ½ teaspoon of seeds to your dry components and mix well
7. Add water 1 tablespoon at a time and work it into the mixture until you have the consistency of cookie dough. The idea is to get the mixture to stick to itself enough to form balls.
8. Form the seed balls with your fingers; they should be roughly the size of a large marble. You want them small enough that they dry fairly quickly and break down easily. They don't need to be perfectly round.
9. Once formed, place them on your aluminum foil sheet to dry, and let them sit out for about 24 hours. You want them to be dry and well-formed before you distribute them.

10. When you're ready to plant, leave the balls on bare ground, and you should avoid placing them on sod or on top of other established plants. The seeds should be able to make direct contact with the ground once rain and weather break them down.

Additional Resources:

1. [Audubon Native Plants Database](#)
2. [Native Plant Society of Texas](#)

