

Growing Trees from Seeds

Collecting Seeds

This leaflet gives you an introduction to collecting and growing your own trees from seed. Tree seed can be collected from late summer into autumn. September is a good time to start. Wait until the seeds start dropping from the trees and then you'll know it's ready.



Where to Collect

Seed can be collected from a local wood or an individual tree. Keep an eye on the trees over the summer to see which ones are looking likely to produce a good supply. Some years are better than others!

Types of seed to collect

We suggest you collect seed from native broadleaf trees as they are naturally occurring within our environment and support a range of wildlife. Some seeds germinate more easily than others and require a lot less preparation so we have chosen seed to reflect this. Remember to leave some seed for wildlife that often rely upon it as a winter food source!

Some good examples of seed for you to collect



- Seed from alder cones
- Nuts from beech trees
- Seed from birch cones
- Nuts from hazel (though germination rates can be low)
- Acorns from oak
- Seed from Scots pine cones
- Nuts from sweet chestnut



The acorns/nuts can be put in a bucket of water after collection. The ones that sink are the plumpest and the ones to use, any that float should be discarded! The alder, birch and Scots pine cones can be put in a paper bag to dry out thoroughly and then after a few days can be shaken or broken up with your fingers to release the seed.



Alder cone



Beech nut



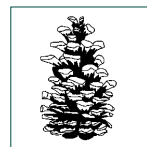
Birch cone



Hazel nut



Acorn



Pine cone



Sweet chestnut

Every child should have the chance to plant trees

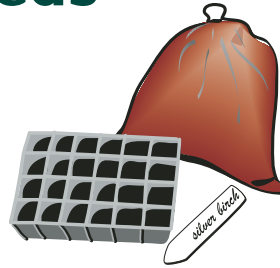
Please call **0845 108 1428** (charged at local rate) or visit www.treeforall.org.uk for further information
The Woodland Trust, Autumn Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL
The **Tree For All** logo is a trademark of the Woodland Trust
Registered charity number 294344

Growing Trees from Seeds

What to do next

You will need;

- Containers to sow your seed
- Some compost
- A label to mark your seeds



All of these seeds can be planted straight away in a suitable container. This could be a small plant pot, old milk carton or yoghurt pot for example. Make sure the container has holes in the bottom for drainage.

Fill your container ideally with a mixture of peat free compost and sharp sand (to improve drainage). A pinch of alder, birch or Scots pine seed can be sown on top of the compost and then covered with a thin layer of sharp sand. Acorns and nuts should be sown to a depth of approximately one and half times their length in the compost and sharp sand mixture. Make sure the compost is firmed down.

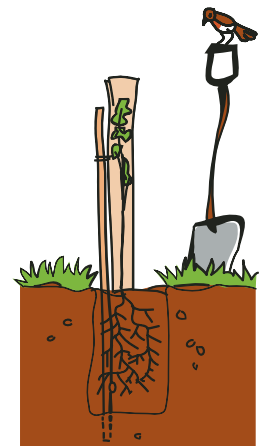
The pots can be left outside over the autumn and winter. You'll need to ensure the seeds don't get eaten by mice, birds or squirrels! Some small gauge chicken wire over the tops of the pots is one method. Also guard against harsh frosts, wind and strong sun. A shady spot against a house wall is ideal. Write out a label and put in the pot too so you don't forget what you've sown!

How to care for your young trees

When the seeds have germinated in the spring ensure the compost doesn't dry out too much but at the same time don't allow it to get waterlogged. You can weed round the young seedlings and thin out any weaker ones where you have a number growing in one pot.

Where to plant

When the seedlings have grown into small trees, approximately 20 – 40 cm tall, they will be ready for planting out. They need to be planted in a suitable location that will allow the trees to grow to their full size so choose the location accordingly and ensure you have the landowner's permission.



Looking after your trees when they are planted

Small trees tend to grow well when they are transplanted at a young age. Just ensure they have a weed free area around the base. Using some form of mulch around the tree will help to suppress weeds and retain moisture within the soil. Old carpet, grass clippings and bark chips are a number of the options. In some locations, primarily rural ones, it may be necessary to use tree guards to protect against browsing rabbits or deer.

What else to do with your trees!

If you don't have a suitable place to plant your trees how about offering them to a local environmental project. Have a look on the events page of the Tree For All website and find a project local to you, but make sure you check with the organisers first before turning up with your trees! Alternatively how about selling them at a car boot sale or summer fair. The proceeds could go to the Woodland Trust or Tree Aid, the charity that supports community tree planting projects in Africa.

Every child should have the chance to plant trees

Please call **0845 108 1428** (charged at local rate) or visit www.treeforall.org.uk for further information
The Woodland Trust, Autumn Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL
The **Tree For All** logo is a trademark of the Woodland Trust
Registered charity number 294344

Growing Trees from Seeds

Further resources

www.treeforall.org.uk – Tree For All

www.woodland-trust.org.uk/hedge – Hedge and copse packs and seed kits

www.native-tree-shop.com – Purchase native trees

www.treecouncil.org.uk – The Tree Council Good Seed Guide

www.british-trees.com – Further details on tree identification

www.btcv.org.uk – British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces – BBC Breathing Places

www.treeaid.org.uk – Tree Aid



Alder



Alder leaves



Alder seed cones



Beech



Beech leaves



Beech nuts



Hazel



Hazel leaves



Hazel nuts

Every child should have the chance to plant trees

Please call **0845 108 1428** (charged at local rate) or visit www.treeforall.org.uk for further information

The Woodland Trust, Autumn Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL

The **Tree For All** logo is a trademark of the Woodland Trust

Registered charity number 294344

Growing Trees from Seeds



Oak



Oak leaves



Acorn



Scots pine



Scots pine needles



Scots pine cones



Silver birch



Silver birch leaves



Silver birch seed



Sweet chestnut



Sweet chestnut leaves



Sweet chestnuts

Every child should have the chance to plant trees

Please call **0845 108 1428** (charged at local rate) or visit www.treeforall.org.uk for further information
The Woodland Trust, Autumn Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL
The **Tree For All** logo is a trademark of the Woodland Trust
Registered charity number 294344