

PREPARING SEEDS FOR PLANTING

Some seeds may need to be scarified before planting.



Scarifying seeds helps speed up the process of germination. At Trees For Tucson, we prefer to use nail clippers to gently clip a sliver off the side of the seed. A metal file can also be used to gently buff the edge of a seed. Only remove a small portion off the edge, until you see the inner white part of a seed. Removing too much can damage the embryo and prevent germination.

Soak seeds in water overnight.



Like scarifying, soaking seeds before planting can help prime the seed to germinate. This process synchronizes all seeds so they germinate sooner and together.

Plant seeds in warm, moist seed starting mix.



Plant 1-2 seeds per container to ensure at least one seedling emerges. Seed starting mix is recommended.

BENEFITS OF PLANTING NATIVE & DESERT-ADAPTED TREES

Environmental

Supports native biodiversity in the Sonoran Desert



Reduces soil erosion and mitigates runoff

Acts as carbon sinks



Provides food and other vital resources for native wildlife

Urban

Conserves water resources in a desert climate



Cools urban environments

Reduces energy bills



Increases property value and visual aesthetics

Health

Supports mental health & well-being



Removes pollutants from the air

Reduces stress and could help lower blood pressure

Fun fact:

Many parts of our native, Sonoran desert plants are edible. Mesquite seed pods can be used for baking flour, and desert hackberries can be a sweet treat!

Scan the QR code below to see pictures and more propagation instructions with a detailed list of the native and desert tree species listed here:



Tucson Clean & Beautiful
(520) 791-3109

<https://tucsoncleanandbeautiful.org/>

Tucson Clean and Beautiful
& Trees for Tucson

LEARN HOW TO GROW DESERT TREES FROM SEED



Screwbean Mesquite (*Prosopis pubescens*) Seed Pods



"DON'T JUDGE EACH DAY BY THE HARVEST YOU REAP
BUT BY THE SEEDS THAT YOU PLANT." -ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

A GUIDE TO GROWING NATIVE AND DESERT-ADAPTED TREES FROM SEED



Species	Common Name	Seed Harvest Season	Seed Collection & Treatment	Growing Conditions
<i>Celtis pallida</i>	Desert hackberry	August to late winter	Picking off fruits is easier when leaves have fallen. Allow berries to dry completely before storing. Soak berries in water overnight.	Fall sowing of untreated seeds and spring sowing of stratified seeds is recommended. Cover with 1/2 inch soil. Seedlings appear in 2–3 weeks.
<i>Celtis reticulata</i>	Netleaf hackberry	August to late winter	Harvest mature fruits and remove flesh by soaking in water and rubbing against a screen (wet maceration). Soak fruits in water overnight.	Sow seeds covering with 1/2 inch of firmed soil. Seedlings appear in 3–4 weeks.
<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>	Carob	July to December	Harvest mature fruits and break open the seed pod to collect seeds. Scarify and soak seeds in water overnight.	Sow seeds covering with 1/2 inch of firmed soil. Seedlings appear in 2–5 weeks after sowing, depending on temperature.
<i>Chilopsis linearis</i>	Desert willow	September to late winter	Seeds are only viable for 1 year. Lay seed pods out to dry and collect seeds when pods open. Soak in water overnight.	Sow seeds covering with 1/4 inch soil. Seedlings appear in 6–12 days.
<i>Dermatophyllum (Sophora) secundiflora</i>	Texas mountain laurel	July to October	Wait until seed pods are dry, and use pliers to crack open the shell. Soak seeds in water overnight. Caution: seeds are poisonous. Keep away from children and pets.	Grow seeds in moist, fast-draining soil and cover with 1/2 inch of soil. Seedlings appear 3–5 weeks after sowing.
<i>Ebenopsis ebano</i>	Texas ebony	August to November	Use pliers to crack open the dry shell to retrieve seeds. Scarify and soak seeds in water overnight.	Grow seeds in moist, fast-draining soil and cover with 1/2 inch of soil. Seedlings appear in 6–10 days.
<i>Mariosousa willardiana</i>	Palo blanco	July to August	Collect dry seed pods that are light brown. Pick those that rattle. Extract seeds and let dry before storing. Soak in water overnight. Select seeds that have not been affected by beetles.	Grow seeds in moist, fast-draining soil and sow 1/4 – 1 inch deep and cover with 1/4 inch of soil. Seedlings appear 4–10 days after sowing.
<i>Olneya tesota</i>	Desert ironwood	August to September	Seed pods should be dried for several days to facilitate seed extraction. Fumigate if larvae present. Soak seeds in water overnight. Fresh seeds require no treatment except a 12–24hr water soaking.	Sow seeds and cover with 1/4 inch of soil or sand. Fast germination 24 hrs after sowing – be careful not to overwater. Seedlings appear 6–10 days after sowing.
<i>Parkinsonia florida</i>	Blue palo verde	June to July	Collect dry seed pods which are light brown. Pick those that rattle. Extract seeds and let dry before storing. Scarify and soak in water overnight.	Grow seeds in moist, fast-draining soil and sow 1/4 – 1 inch deep and cover with 1/4 inch of soil. Seedlings appear 4–10 days after sowing.
<i>Parkinsonia microphylla</i>	Foothills palo verde	June to July	Collect dry seed pods that are light brown. Pick those that rattle. Extract seeds let dry before storing. Scarify and soak in water overnight.	Grow seeds in moist, fast-draining soil and sow 1/4 – 1 inch deep and cover with 1/4 inch of soil. Seedlings appear 4–10 days after sowing.
<i>Parkinsonia praecox</i>	Palo brea	July to August	Collect dry seed pods that are light brown. Pick those that rattle. Extract seeds let dry before storing. Scarify and soak in water overnight.	Grow seeds in moist, fast-draining soil and sow 1/4 – 1 inch deep and cover with 1/4 inch of soil. Seedlings appear 4–10 days after sowing.
<i>Prosopis pubescens</i>	Screwbean mesquite	July to September	Harvest mature seed pods just before pods open. Allow seeds to dry then gently crush the pod to extract seed. Soak in water overnight.	Sow seeds covering with 1/4 inch soil. Seedlings appear 6–10 days after sowing.
<i>Prosopis velutina</i>	Velvet mesquite	June to September	Harvest mature seed pods just before pods open. Allow to dry then gently crush the pod to extract seed. Soak in water overnight.	Sow seeds covering with 1/4 inch soil. Seedlings appear 6–10 days after sowing.
<i>Senegalia (Acacia) greggii</i>	Catclaw acacia	July to September	Collect dry seed pods and crack open to retrieve seeds. Scarify and soak seeds in water overnight.	Grow seeds in moist, fast-draining soil and sow 1/2 inch deep and cover. Seedlings appear 4–10 days after sowing.
<i>Vachellia (Acacia) constricta</i>	White thorn acacia	July to September	Collect dry seed pods and crack open to retrieve seeds. Scarify and soak seeds in water overnight.	Grow seeds in moist, fast-draining soil and sow 1/2 inch deep and cover. Seedlings appear 4–10 days after sowing.

Please note the species listed in this pamphlet have been updated to the most current latin species name. Previous latin names are in parentheses for reference.