

Grow your own trees!

You will need:

- Buckets or bowls of water.
- Potato masher.
- Seed tray or margarine tub with small holes made in the bottom.
- Small pebbles or pieces of broken pot.
- Seed compost (available from garden centres, please get peat-free compost!).
- Seeds which have been in cold storage for several weeks.
- Cling film or sheet of clear plastic.
- Cellotape.

Propagator kits can be bought at garden centres and from school suppliers if you prefer.

Preparing the Seeds

The method will depend upon the type of seeds:

- A. Nuts** - acorns, beech mast, conkers etc. Remove these from their outer casings e.g. the acorn cup, conker case.
- B. Winged seeds** - Ash, field maple etc. Remove from twigs but don't remove the wing.
- C. Fleshy fruit** - hips, hawthorn berries, crab apple, holly etc. In the wild these would be eaten by animals. As the seed passed through an animal's digestive system the flesh would be removed. To imitate this soak the seeds in water to help soften the fruit. Mash them gently with the potato masher to remove the flesh. Sieve off the seeds and wash under a tap.

Planting

1. Sieve the compost and discard the larger pieces.
2. Place a few pebbles in the bottom of the propagator (fig. 1).
3. Then $\frac{3}{4}$ fill with compost. Make sure you **don't** press the compost down.
4. Take your seeds and place point down onto the compost leaving a space between each one at least 3 cm (fig. 2). Larger seeds require a wider gap between each one.
5. Cover the seeds with more compost at a depth that is the same as the size of the seed e.g. a seed 10mm long will need to be covered with compost to a depth of 10mm.
6. Cover with cling film or with a clear plastic to keep the warmth and moisture in.
7. Place the tray in a sheltered, sunny and warm spot. A windowsill is ideal (fig. 3).

Fig.1

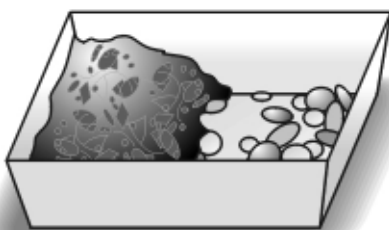


Fig.2

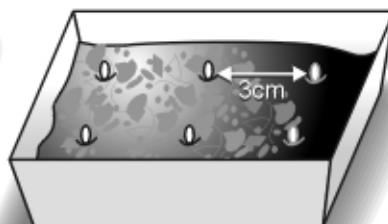
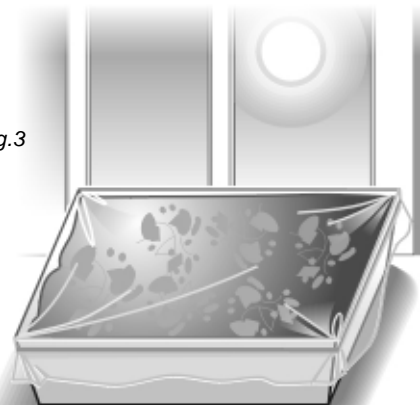


Fig.3



Care

DO	DO NOT
Water from below so that the soil can absorb as much moisture as it requires. Place the propagator on a plate in large container with water inside and leave for an hour or two.	Let your compost dry out.
Keep in direct sunlight until the seeds sprout.	Leave the seeds sitting in water for too long as they may rot.
Give your seeds a chance to germinate. It may take several weeks.	Give up! If your seeds don't germinate put the tray outside in a corner of the school grounds. You may be lucky, and they may germinate, even if you have to wait two years!

Trees are unpredictable in their germination. Try growing some other seeds in propagators to see how they develop. Growing a hyacinth bulb in a jam jar will show the children how roots grow down into the soil.

Transplanting

Once your seedlings have grown two "real" leaves (i.e. leaves which look like those on the full grown tree) it is time to transplant them to small individual pots:

1. Let the soil dry out slightly and carefully remove the seedling (be sure to hold it gently by the leaves and not the stem).
2. Put some pebbles or broken pot in the bottom of the pot.
3. Fill the pot $\frac{3}{4}$ full and place the seed on top (fig. 4).
4. Sprinkle the soil around it until the roots are well covered.
5. **Do not press the soil down.** Just water and leave in a warm, sunlit place (fig. 5).

Allow the seedling to grow, caring for it as you did the seeds. You can keep them outside. Allow the plant to grow until it is too big for the pot and then transplant into the grounds or a site you have permission to put them in. Do not plant too close to the school or other buildings i.e. at least 3 metres away and about 2 metres from other trees. Hopefully your tree will grow to be a good size and age!

If you do not have an open green space to plant your tree in why not purchase or build a large planter (about 1m²) to grow your tree in. The tree should grow to the size of the planter.

