

Seed Balls



Goals

Students will learn a new method for dispersing seeds that has both artistic and historical value.

Objectives

Students will create seed balls.

Materials

- 1¼ cup dry terracotta clay finely ground and sifted through a strainer to remove large chunks of clay. *Note: clay can be found at any local ceramics store. In Denver, try Mile Hi Ceramics.*
- ¾ cup dry organic compost
- ¼ cup assorted seeds

Time: 25 minutes (1-2 days to dry)

Background Information

This activity will make 30-40 seed balls and can be a fun and tactile way to engage students in gardening. Use any variety of seeds that attract beneficial insects including: clover, alfalfa, alyssum, nasturtium, yarrow, lettuce and greens, carrot, dill, daikon, celery, radish, fennel, caraway, gypsophila, coriander, calendula, mustard, anise, hyssop, phacelia, agastache and amaranth. Be aware of where you spread perennial seeds or self-seeding annuals, as well as noxious weeds in your area. Colorado noxious weeds are listed here:

<http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/Agriculture-Main/CDAG/1174084048733>.

Seed balls are also known as ‘seed bombs’ and are sometimes used in urban areas to plant guerrilla gardens. The ‘seed bombs’ are thrown over fences onto derelict land to create more beautiful spaces. For derelict land, a minimum of ten seed balls per square meter is required!

Introduction (5 min)

Explain to students: Seed balls were a traditional method of planting for many Native American tribes. Seed balls are great for dry or arid climates. The clay surrounding the seeds protects them from blowing away, getting eaten by birds or other animals and from drying out in the sun. Seed balls sit on top of the soil until sufficient rain comes, and then the compost and clay act as nutrients to nourish the emerging seedling. Seed balls are great for throwing out into areas with poor soil since you do not have to plant them.

Activity Steps (15 min)

1. Have a few youth volunteers use their hands to mix assorted seeds, dry organic compost, and dry clay together in a large bin.
2. Mist or pour a small amount of water onto the bin while continuing to mix. Spray or add just enough water so that the mixture binds together but does not stick to your hands.

3. Take a pinch of the finished mixture and roll into penny-sized round balls in the palm of your hand.
4. Put seed balls on a tray to completely dry in the sun for a day or two. Store in a dark, dry place or throw seed balls into the garden. Water to allow seeds to germinate.

Conclusion (5 min)

Facilitate a quick discussion and review how the seeds will germinate with the students. Then have students discuss where they will plant their seed balls and why.

Sources

Adapted from: *Heavy Petal: Gardening, From a West Coast Urban Organic Perspective*
(<http://heavypetal.ca/archives/2011/01/step-by-step-how-to-make-seed-balls/>).

Notes
