



SEED SOWING INSTRUCTIONS

Blackthorn

Treating and growing on seed

Need: Sloes, cleaning equipment (see 2.1), polythene freezer bags, vermiculite (available from Garden Centres), growing tray, peat free loam based potting compost, sharp sand, liquid fertilizer.
Optional: fine grit, watering tray.

1. Storage

Store sloes in hessian sack, allowing them to breathe. In early October crush berries firmly under your foot in bag to hasten rotting process of flesh.

2. Stratification

As soon as possible in October start stratification process.

Steps :

2.1 Preparation

Clean flesh off seed (by now flesh is easily removed).

Technique: place berries in bird feeder with 1/4" mesh and blast with high pressure hose. Alternatively, sieve/rolling pin/food blender are good alternatives!

Wash seed thoroughly to remove all flesh (which can contain inhibitors to germination).

Pretreat seed in a medium. Mix moist vermiculite and compost with seed at ratio of 3 parts seed to one of compost/vermiculite, and place in polythene freezer bag or use a suitable plastic container if rodents are a problem.

Add water until damp - not much required - use a beaker or similar container..

Label seed inside bag and tie off top of bag.

Mark up bag with seed collection details : species, collection site, date.

2.2 Pretreatment

2.2.1 Store in warm conditions (15° to 18° C max.) for 2-4 weeks - use warm room, in light or dark conditions. Once a week open bag : shake seeds allowing carbon dioxide to escape and oxygen in. Re-moisten if necessary and remove any mouldy seeds.

2.2.2 Store in cold conditions (1° to 5° C) for 18 weeks or as long as seed takes to 'chit' (produce a root) - use fridge.

Continue weekly routine as in 2.2.1

At first signs of chitting, check bag regularly for root emergence.

3. Sowing

Fill seed tray or rigipot cells with compost to 1-2 cm. from top of tray. Bang on table to firm.

Sow seed in growing tray when root is about 1/2" long, using peat free loam based potting compost. Fill tray asap with chitted seed (keeps growth even).

Do not sow seed with too long a shoot. Plant out seeds with long roots in a rigipot that has deep cells.

Cover compost in cells with fine grit/coarse sand if available..

4. Growing

4.1 Positioning of tray

Put trays of early seedlings on windowsill/in warm greenhouse to avoid winter cold/frosts; if available move into cold frame/greenhouse in April/May, or else leave on windowsill.

Move trees outside in September to overwinter, avoiding excessive sunlight.

Ensure slugs / snails / rodents, etc. cannot get at the seedlings.

Turn the tray regularly to avoid bending of tree stems (seedlings grow towards the light).

4.2 Watering

Water regularly- every 3-4 days in mid-summer. Water less regularly in winter, but enough to keep roots damp.

It is difficult to overwater in summer - if in doubt, be generous.

4.3 Feeding

Mix in liquid fertiliser when watering, if necessary. Ask for assistance if unclear.

5.0 Advice service and helpline

Phone: 07751 365094

E-mail advice@tominalis.co.uk