

Is there Enough?

A population must have enough strong individuals successfully reproducing seed to survive the export of seed by wildcrafters.

To gauge this, count the plants with seed. Try to limit collections to populations of 50+ within view at once.

Never collect if there are 10 or fewer plants with viable seed. Certainly do not collect seed from rare or endangered plants.



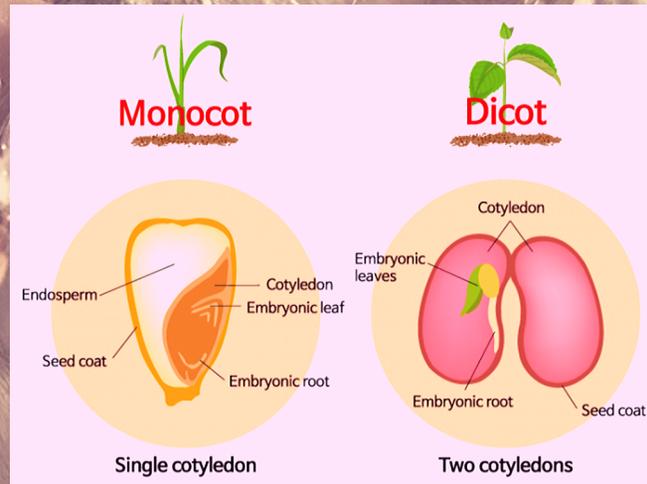
- ~ 50 individual plants within view with viable seedset
- Seedset is abundant
- Population has both young and old individuals
- Species is known

Is it Ripe & Mature?

Take a small sample of seed in hand from one plant and examine it closely. Notice the variation in maturity in your sample - is most seed fully mature? Collection should occur only at that point. If you collect too early, much seed will be wasted - not useful to you and not able to complete its lifecycle.

Ripe seed has a hard seed coat and most species will resist being smashed if you try to cut into the seed with your thumbnail.

Seed maturity is about whether complete fertilization occurred and the embryo is developed and protected by the seed coat. Immature seed is often milky. Mature seed is brittle and hard. Use a jeweler's loupe or magnifying glass to inspect seed over a light and you will find each mature seed has a dense core where the embryonic root and life potential reside.



How Much Do I Need?

Take only as much seed from the ecosystem as is both necessary and fair. Certainly take no more than 25% of the ripe, mature seed available on a given day.

Consider that native seeds generally have high rates of germination. Estimate the number of seeds you need for your planting project. If the sample you examined was mostly fully mature, how many samples from how many individual plants would you need to meet your collection need? Count out loud to that number as you collect to keep track.

Give thanks!

Label each collection bag:

- Species/plant name
- Date of collection
- Location of collection
- Target collection size

Seed storage

Clean and labeled seed can be stored if protected from heat, light, moisture/humidity, and insects. A sturdy envelope in a plastic tub with silica packets works very well. Do not store in air-tight containers because seeds are alive and need air!

Tools

- Paper grocery bags
- Field guide to local plants with described rare & endangered
- Nitrile gloves
- Pruning shears
- Loupe or magnifying glass
- Permanent marker
- Razor blade to cut seed open for inspection of maturity
- Silica packets
- Kitchen sieves to clean off chaff

Cameron Weber tends to the healing of Earth's critical land and water through restoration, gardening, and educational events.

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Wild Seed Collection

A Guide to Ethical and Viable Wildcrafting

Wild seed is a critical part of the local ecosystem. Collecting seed can either participate in the ecosystem or deplete it. Choose participation as a wildcrafter by asking permission from the place, and by taking only what you can steward.

Don't collect from the first plant you see, but walk among the population and notice which plants have abundant seed. Return the seed you collect to the soil - seed can only take root out of your hands.

Note the soil texture and local ecology to better meet these needs come

"With every deed you are sowing a seed, though the harvest you may not see."

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Planting Time