

Seed to sapling

Newsletter



WELCOME

Hello! Welcome to the second edition of the Seed to Sapling Newsletter.

September is a busy month in the tree growing calendar, many species will be ready to collect seed from.

Have a read through the information in this edition, to learn how to recognise when seeds are ready to collect.



I am excited to share that work has started at the Tree Nursery site in Clapham village, preparing the plot for the seed growing tables. We hope that it will be completed by early Autumn!

This month, myself, Aila and Olivia will be visiting a few more tree nurseries in the Dales and the Lakes. We hope to gain some more advice for growing trees that we will be able to share with you all.

We are also busy planning several tree growing events to take place across October and November in Clapham, Swaledale, Malham and Crosby Ravensworth, more details to follow soon!

As always, if you have any suggestions, questions or feedback please do get in touch and let me know. Happy reading!

Eva,
Community Conservation Officer

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS



This month we had a great session with some of the members of the Crosby Ravensworth Parish Tree Group.

We potted on seedlings that were planted in 2023, including oak, hawthorn, sycamore, crab apple, alder and blackthorn!



Myself, Aila and Olivia have been working with Natural England to try and find some sites across the Dales that have some of the rarer native species of willow such as Tea-leaved, Purple and Eared willow. We hope that in future we might be able to explore the possibility of growing rarer willows from cuttings to increase their numbers locally across the Dales.





UPCOMING EVENTS

17th September, 18:30-19:30.

Rooted in Community: Exploring Permaculture Through Tree Nurseries.

Fellowship of the Trees are hosting this free online webinar, open to all. Details and booking information can be found via this [link](#).

22nd September, 10:00-12:00 (approximate finish time)

Sustainable Swaledale: Seed Collection walk

Members of sustainable Swaledale will be leading this seed collection walk, aiming to collect rowan, hawthorn, hazel, downy birch and alder. Collecting bags will be provided.

If you would like to join or have any questions, get in touch with Naomi via email at naomi.j.meredith@gmail.com.

The meeting point is Rampsholme Bridge at 10am, if walking from Muker allow 10-15 minutes to get to the meeting point.

The Tree Council

There are several online events during September and October hosted by The Tree Council, as well some great resources covering all things tree growing!

Take a look via the link [here](#).



SEEDS TO COLLECT

- Alder
- Birch: Downy & Silver
- Blackthorn
- Crab apple
- Elder
- Hawthorn
- Hazel
- Juniper
- Oak: Pendunculate & Sessile
- Rock Whitebeam
- Rowan
- Scots pine
- Small leaved lime
- Whitebeam
- Wild service tree

How to Collect Seeds

- Only collect seeds if you have landowner permission to do so.
- For smaller fruits, pick seeds when they are ripe directly from the trees (where you can comfortably reach!)
- Larger fruits and nuts can be collected from the ground, but avoid any that have started to decay or look like they've been nibbled!
- The first seeds to drop often have limited success, so wait a few days for more to drop.
- Don't take too many seeds, they are an important food source for many animals.
- Take care not to disturb any wildlife, such as nesting birds.
- Collect different species in individual bags and label them with the location you have found them (what3words is useful for this), the date, and the species.
- Tree diseases and pests are now a serious threat to our woodlands, please ensure that you are aware of the risks and are thoroughly washing your footwear between different sites.
- Stratify your seeds as soon as you can.
- There are many different methods of seed stratification, so have a play around and see which method works for you! I have included some species-specific guidance below to help.

Alder

- Likes wet ground. Tolerant of soil with low nitrogen levels.
 - Cones will start to open when they are ready to collect.
1. Store the cones in a large paper bag or open tray/box. As the seeds dry in the paper bag they will drop their seeds, you can give them a shake to dislodge them once they have started to drop.
 2. Store the seeds in paper bags in a cool dry place until the Spring!
 3. At beginning of March soak the seeds for 24 hours in cold water and then drain, mix with a small amount of moist sand and place in a loosely tied plastic bag in the fridge for 4-6 weeks, then sow.

Birch: Silver and Downy

- **Downy Birch** likes infertile soil, particularly poorly-drained peat.
 - **Silver birch** like well-drained soils.
 - Bracts will turn from green to brown when they are ready to collect.
1. Store the bracts in a large paper bag or open tray/box. As the seeds dry in the paper bag they will drop their seeds, you can give them a shake to dislodge them once they have started to drop.
 2. Store the seeds in paper bags in a cool dry place until the Spring!

Blackthorn

- Will grow almost anywhere, except waterlogged soils.
- Fruits will turn black when they are ready to collect.
- There are several methods for stratifying blackthorn seeds, here are a couple you can try:

Method 1:

Quicker and simpler but your seeds might take 2 years to grow and have lower germination success.

1. Prepare your germination tray by filling it 1/3 with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel.
2. Scatter the berries over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil.

Method 2:

Fiddly and will take a bit longer, but generally seeds will have higher germination success and start growing within the first year.

1. Mash the berries and then pass through a sieve to separate the seeds from the pulp. You can soak the seeds first to soften them, but be careful not to let them ferment.
 2. Blackthorn seeds need to be sown straight away, so fill your germination tray 1/3 with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel. Spread the seeds over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil.
 3. Water the tray well and leave in a shady spot until Spring!
- It can take two years to germinate, so be patient.
 - Blackthorn benefit from four weeks in a warm moist environment (e.g. indoors) before being sown in the spring.
 - Seedlings can be potted on once two sets of adult leaves have grown and the root has begun to appear.

Elder

- Likes nutrient rich soil.
- Berries will turn black when they are ready to collect.
- There are several methods for stratifying Elder seeds, here are a couple you can try:

Method 1:

Quicker and simpler but your seeds might take 2 years to grow and have lower germination success.

1. Prepare your germination tray by filling it 1/3 with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel.
2. Scatter the berries over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil.

Method 2:

Fiddly and will take a bit longer, but generally seeds will have higher germination success and start growing within the first year.

1. Mash the berries and then pass through a sieve to separate the seeds from the pulp. You can soak the seeds first to soften them, but be careful not to let them ferment.
 2. Elder seeds need to be sown straight away, so fill your germination tray 1/3 with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel. Spread the seeds over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil.
 3. Water the tray well and leave in a shady spot until Spring!
- It can take two years to germinate, so be patient. If about 10% are showing signs of germination, they are ready to sow.
 - Seedlings can be potted on once two sets of adult leaves have grown and the root has begun to appear.

Hawthorn

- Tolerant of most soils excluding very acid or wet sites.
- Berries will turn red when they are ready to collect.
- There are several methods for stratifying Hawthorn seeds, here are a couple you can try:

Method 1:

Quicker and simpler but your seeds might take longer to grow and have lower germination success.

1. Prepare your germination tray by filling it 1/3 with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel.
2. Scatter the berries over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil.

Method 2:

Fiddly and will take a bit longer, but generally seeds will have higher germination success.

1. Mash the berries and then pass through a sieve to separate the seeds from the pulp. You can soak the seeds first to soften them, but be careful not to let them ferment.
 2. Hawthorn seeds need to be sown straight away, so fill your germination tray 1/3 with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel. Spread the seeds over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil.
 3. Water the tray well and leave in a shady spot until the second Spring!
- It will take two years to germinate, so be patient.
 - Seedlings can be potted on once two sets of adult leaves have grown and the root has begun to appear.

Hazel

- Grows well in most soils except water logged or very infertile soil and will tolerate some shade.
 - Nuts will turn from green to brown when they are ready to collect.
1. Fill your germination tray 1/3 with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel. Spread the nuts over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil. Alternatively, you can sow immediately into individual pots.
 2. Make sure they are protected from frost and predators.
- In the spring sow the nuts that have germinated.

Juniper

Please note that juniper is susceptible to several diseases so be extra vigilant and ensure you have clean footwear, only collect from healthy plants and accurately record and monitor any seeds you grow.

- Likes dry, chalky and sandy soils, and they're unusual in their ability to tolerate both acid and alkaline conditions.
 - The berries (which are actually cones) turn blue when ready to be collected. Avoid picking when they are green. Cones are not always produced every year as they may take two seasons to ripen completely.
 - It can be difficult to grow juniper from seed so for more detailed information visit: [Growing Juniper](#)
1. The cones, holding one to three seeds, are very resinous and extraction of the seeds can be very difficult.
 2. One method is to use a blender with plenty of warm water to break up the cones but be careful not to damage the seeds.
 3. Leave the mixture to stand for a few minutes and the debris should float and any good seeds sink to the bottom.
 4. Then wash the seeds with detergent and take off any further debris and then leave the seed to dry before storing in paper bags.
 5. Before sowing the seed should be soaked for two days and mixed with equal parts of sand and compost, one part seed to two parts compost mix. Add a layer of stones to your germination tray, followed by a layer of sand, then the seed-compost mix, then a layer of sand 2-3cm thick.
 6. Leave a shady spot outdoors, keep moist and protect from wildlife until spring!
- It can take one-two years to germinate, so be patient.
 - Seedlings can be potted on once two sets of adult leaves have grown and the root has begun to appear.

Oak: Pendunculate and Sessile

- **Pendunculate** (also known as English Oak) prefers deep, fertile, clay soils and damp lowlands but is generally tolerant.
 - **Sessile** tolerates poorer, lighter, more acid soils and is also more shade and frost tolerant.
 - Acorns will drop from the tree when they are ready to collect.
1. Acorns require no pre-treatment and can be sown immediately or can be stored for a week or two but ensure they do not dry out as this will kill them.
 2. If the acorns are kept damp and covered with leaves, moss or some light soil the roots will soon begin to grow and they can then be planted into individual pots.
- Oaks are one of the easiest trees to grow!
 - Avoid the acorns that are first to fall as they are often damaged or diseased.

Rock Whitebeam

- This tree is specially adapted to grow on rocky and dry soils.
 - It is becoming increasingly rare and is often found clinging to areas of rocky woodland and fissures in limestone cliffs.
 - Not to be confused with Common Whitebeam that is native to the South of England but rarely found wild in the North.
 - Berries turn red when they are ripe. However this will depend on consistent warm weather at the time of pollination, fertilisation and during seed development. If the seed appears flat or thin it is not fully developed.
1. Fruits should be mashed and soaked in clean water for a week to 10 days to allow natural yeasts to grow that will help break down and soften the fruit.
 2. The fruit can then be further macerated to free the seeds from the flesh. Poor or undeveloped seeds float and those that sink are likely to be more viable.
 3. The fully developed seeds can be sown directly after washing and must not be dried out or stored as this dramatically reduces viability.
 4. Fill your germination tray 1/3 with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel. Spread the seeds over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil.
- It can take one-two years to germinate, so be patient.
 - Seedlings can be potted on once two sets of adult leaves have grown and the root has begun to appear.

Rowan

- Likes poor, thin, acidic soils and is hardy, so is tolerant of very exposed sites.
- Berries will turn red when they are ripe.
- There are several methods for stratifying rowan seeds, here are a couple you can try:

Method 1:

Quicker and simpler but your seeds might take 2 years to grow and have lower germination success.

1. Prepare your germination tray by filling it 1/3 with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel.
2. Scatter the berries over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil.

Method 2:

Fiddly and will take a bit longer, but generally seeds will have higher germination success and start growing within the first year.

1. Mash the berries and then pass through a sieve to separate the seeds from the pulp. You can soak the seeds first to soften them, but be careful not to let them ferment.
 2. Rowan seeds need to be sown straight away, so fill your germination tray 1/3 with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel. Spread the seeds over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil.
 3. Water the tray well and leave in a shady spot until Spring!
- Seedlings can be potted on once two sets of adult leaves have grown and the root has begun to appear.
 - It can take two years to germinate, so be patient.

Scots Pine

- Thrives in light, well-drained or gravelly soil
 - Cones can be collected from the lower branches of trees when they have turned from green to brown
1. Store the cones in a large paper bag or open tray/box. As the seeds dry in the paper bag they will drop their seeds, you can give them a shake to dislodge them once they have started to drop.
 2. Store the seeds in paper bags in a cool dry place until the Spring!

Small Leaved Lime

- Likes nutrient-rich, moist but well drained soils.
 - Bracts will turn from green to brown when they are ready to collect.
1. Store the bracts in a large paper bag or open tray/box. As the seeds dry in the paper bag they will drop their seeds, you can give them a shake to dislodge them once they have started to drop.
 2. Fill your germination tray 1/3 with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel. Spread the seeds over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil.
 3. Water the tray well and leave in a cool, frost-free place such as a garage and keep moist until Spring!
- Seedlings can be potted on once two sets of adult leaves have grown and the root has begun to appear.
 - Germination can take two years, so be patient.

Whitebeam

- Prefers chalk and lime-rich soils but is tolerant of other soil types.
- Collect berries when they turn crimson.
- Timeline: Collect seeds in September, Stratify seeds from October until the end of February, Sow the germinating seeds from March.

To prepare:

1. To remove the flesh from the berries, put the berries in a sieve and gently squeeze them with your fingers under running water to release the seeds.

To stratify (artificial stratification):

1. Soak seeds in water for 24-48 hours. This is to remove germination inhibitors in the seeds and help them take up water.
2. Place the seeds on a kitchen towel and put them in the fridge for 12 weeks.
3. After 12 weeks, seal them in a plastic bag and move them to room temperature.

To sow:

1. Fill your germination tray 1/3 with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel.
2. Spread the seeds over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil.

Wild Service Tree

- Prefers chalk and lime-rich soils but is tolerant of other soil types.
- Collect berries when they are crimson.
- Timeline: Collect seeds in September, Stratify seeds from October until the end of February, Sow the germinating seeds from March.

To prepare:

1. To remove the flesh from the berries, put the berries in a sieve and gently squeeze them with your fingers under running water to release the seeds.

To stratify (artificial stratification):

1. Soak seeds in water for 24-48 hours. This is to remove germination inhibitors in the seeds and help them take up water.
2. Place the seeds on a kitchen towel and put them in the fridge for 12 weeks.
3. After 12 weeks, seal them in a plastic bag and move them to room temperature.

To sow:

1. Fill your germination tray 1/3 with with equal quantities of compost and a coarse material such as coarse sand or fine gravel.
2. Spread the seeds over the soil and cover with another 2-4cm of soil.

WITH THANKS

This project is supported by donations from our supporters and funding from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Sustainable Development Fund and the Defra Trees Call to Action Fund. This fund was developed by Defra in partnership with the Forestry Commission and is being delivered by the Heritage Fund.

Visit the [Tree Growing Community webpage](#) on our website for more information about the Seed to Sapling project, growing trees and previous editions of this newsletter.