

HOW TO MAKE AND USE SEED BOMBS

for native plant revegetation

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Seed bombs (or seed balls) are made from a mixture of clay, compost, seeds and water.

The clay in the seed bombs helps protect the seeds from being taken by predators, and also helps to retain moisture once it becomes wet by rain, which germinates the seeds. The compost supplies nutrients for the establishing plant.

Seed bombs have been successfully used globally for revegetation after bush fires and droughts, in barren areas, to establish food crops and in small scale garden /vegetable plots.

One of the benefits of seed bombs is that the seeds will remain dormant until rain promotes germination. Ideally this will result in quick establishment in the year of sowing, providing a potentially low-cost method of revegetation.

What you will need

- Mixing bowl or flat surface
- 1 part clean fine sieved dry local clay (or potters ball clay or bentonite clay)
- 1 part fine sieved bush or garden compost, or potting mix with no weed seeds
- 1 pinch per ball of local native seed (for example, for wattles use 3 to 5 heat-treated seeds per ball; for eucalypts use 5 to 10 seeds per ball)
- Water in a small jug or mist sprayer, for wetting the clay, seed and compost mix

Directions

- Mix all dry ingredients together
- Add sufficient water to make the mixture into a soft dough consistency, without too much compaction
- Gently roll the mixture in your hands to form small balls, about 2 cm in diameter
- Put the balls on a tray to dry in warm airy conditions, ready for use

Use

- Ideally scatter seed bombs containing locally collected seed in fire or drought affected areas of bushland, non-grazed, uncultivated or barren areas
- Seed bombs can be spread by hand, broadcaster or dropped from aircraft
- Seed bombing should be timed prior to, or to coincide with, rain to soften the seed ball and increase the success of germination
- For NSW Riverina and Highlands areas, scatter seed bombs in anticipation of opening and follow-up Autumn rains

Potential issues

- Establishment rates can be low
- Sufficient quantities of local native seed may be difficult to source
- Germinating and follow-up rain are required for seedlings to establish
- New plants may be grazed by animals, especially after drought or fire
- The process can be labour-intensive for large quantities (although there are machines available for this).