



# 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](mailto:advice@tominalis.co.uk)