

Creating a Living Tree Seed Necklace

One of the most fascinating biological processes in nature is seed germination. Watch a tree seed sprout fuzzy roots and eventually grow into a little tree sapling with our Tree Seed Necklace Project! Carry your own little piece of the Purdue Arboretum with you wherever you go.

You will need:

- A small Ziploc® bag or bottle
- Paper towels
- Clean water
- A string, yarn, or sturdy jewelry chain
- Sand paper, hammer, or knife (for adult use only!) OR a method for heating water

Instructions

1) **Collecting Seeds:** Come visit the Purdue campus in September or October (when seeds are at their prime) to collect your tree seeds. These should be seeds that have already fallen off the tree. Some trees that are easier to germinate include:

- Maples (*Acer*)
- Elms (*Ulmus*)
- Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)
- Linden (*Tilia*)
- Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*)
- Viburnum (*Viburnum*)
- Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)
- Ashes (*Fraxinus*)

Use our Purdue Arboretum Explorer “Find a Plant” feature (<http://mlp.arboretum.purdue.edu/>) to locate these trees. Be sure to collect several of each, as not every seed will be viable (healthy enough to grow).



- 2) **Preparing the Seeds:** Remove any papery or fleshy husks from the seeds, and let them dry out on a flat surface for approximately one week. If the seed has a hard coat, it will need to be filed down, cracked, or heated (NOT boiled) in water so that moisture can reach the inside. This is called scarification.



- 3) **Preparing the Seed Environment:** Get several folded lengths of paper towel wet, and ring out the excess water. Spread seeds out evenly over the towels, and don't place more than five seeds in one bag. Leave the bag open.



- 4) **Putting It All Together:** Attach the string, yarn, or chain to the top two corners of the bag to complete your necklace. The combination of moisture from the paper towels and your body heat will trigger the seed to germinate. If you need to take the necklace off, place the bag in sunlight or another warm place.

