

Go seed collecting

To celebrate National Tree Week from 27 November to 5 December, get out and about and become a seed planter.

What you need

- Paper bags
- Pens
- Sieve and spoon
- Somewhere warm and dry

How does it work?

Seeds are cases that house miniature undeveloped plants, and by gathering and growing them, you can help trees to continue thriving. The best time to plant trees is usually from late November to early March, depending on the site and weather conditions. Very few tree seeds will germinate (sprout) without first being exposed to the cold of winter, and some species take longer still. This ensures they don't start growing during a cold winter, when young seedlings might die. Luckily, tree growers have found a way to mimic this natural process – go to tinyurl.com/SN-treeweek to find out all the tips. Why not celebrate National Tree Week between 27 November and 5 December by planting some of the seeds you have gathered?

WARNING!
Wash your hands after picking and handling berries.

TOP TREES
According to a 2017 survey, the UK's favourite tree is the horse chestnut. Silver birch came second, and the mighty oak was third.



1 Go to a local park or public open land and start gathering seeds. Look on the ground for conkers and acorns, or gather some fruits from a hedgerow.



2 Use the guide on the right to find out what seeds you've found. Put the seeds in separate bags and label them with the names of the different species.



3 If you've collected some berries, you can extract the seeds by putting the fruit in a sieve and crushing them. The juice will escape, leaving seeds.

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4 To get the seeds from cones, keep them in a paper bag and leave them in a warm place for a few days. The cones will open up and release their seeds.



5 For acorns and chestnuts, take the nuts out of their cups or cases and pop them into some water. Throw away the ones that float – they won't grow.



6 Winged seeds can be planted with the wings left on. When collecting seeds, always remember to leave some seeds for local wildlife.

Seed-spotting guide

Alder

The seeds of an alder are found in cones. To spot an alder, check for a notch at the tip of their rounded leaves and look for pairs of white veins on the underside.



Beech

Beech trees have oval-shaped leaves with wavy edges. Their seeds are found inside a brown, hairy husk.



Hazel

Hazel leaves are soft and hairy, with saw-toothed edges and a drawn-out tip. Their nuts grow in clusters of up to four each in a structure called a bract. Collect them in autumn as the fruits turn from brown to green.



Pine

The Scots pine is Britain's only native pine tree and is widespread in Scotland. Collect the pine cones when they're brown, then dry them in a paper bag to release their seeds.



Silver birch

A mature birch tree can produce up to one million seeds. Collect their cones from the lower branches of the tree and dry them in a paper bag to release their tiny winged seeds.

