

Basics of Tree Seed Collection

TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE



Why Collect Seed?

- TreeFolks is working with sapling growers like the Texas A&M Forest Service to increase tree diversity
- Native seed is better adapted, producing higher quality seedlings
- Annual seedling production is determined by what seed we have available



Basic Items Needed



- Gloves
- Pruning shears
- Containers – boxes, buckets, paper or cloth bags, burlap sacks, etc.
- Ladder
- Dropcloth
- Seed collection form

Identifying Species

- Include both common and scientific name
- If unsure, don't guess!
- Take photos of as many identifying tree parts as possible (leaves, bark, twigs, buds, whole tree)
- Use iNaturalist or Seek to help with tree ID



Methods of Seed Collection



- Pick or strip directly from tree
- Shake or beat the tree to cause seed to drop
- Collect off of the ground (only if seed has recently fallen)

Proper Timing for Collection

- Collect when seeds are fully mature
- Dependent on the species
- May vary due to environmental factors
- Window for collection may be fairly long or rather short



Proper Timing for Collection



- Mature seeds usually:
 - Dark in color
 - Firm
 - Dry
- Fleshy fruits usually:
 - Change color
 - Soften
- Pods and capsules:
 - Often split open
 - Mature in intervals

Collecting Quality Seed

- Collect only fully mature seed
- Reject seed with obvious decay or insect damage
- When possible, collect seed from only the most healthy trees



How Much to Collect



- Quality over quantity
- Not more than 1/3 of seeds from an existing population
- Collect from different individuals to preserve genetic diversity
- A lot of one species may be better than a little bit of many species

Proper Storage

- Use cardboard boxes, paper bags or cloth bags, when possible
- Avoid airtight containers or plastic bags as they may encourage mold growth
- Don't allow moist fruits to completely dry out



Proper Storage



- Store in refrigerator, if feasible (not freezer!)
- Otherwise, keep cool, dark, dry and protected
- Low temp, humidity and light levels protect seed longevity
- Ship or deliver to TreeFolks as soon as possible

Suggestions

- Be in the habit of always keeping an eye out for seed to collect
- Keep seed collection materials (bags, forms, etc.) in vehicle
- Get others involved in the seed collection process with you



Things to Remember



- Collect mature seeds
- Store properly
- Label correctly
- Ship speedily
- Always be ready!