

How to Make Seed Bombs

Seed bombs can be made from clay/soil combinations, paper mache or even cheesecloth or tea bags. Here is a traditional method where compost and clay act as a carrier for the seeds so they can be launched over walls or fences and into inaccessible areas such as highway medians and railways. Clay attracts and holds moisture while the compost provides nutrients and some of the growing medium. They are a “bomb” way to start a flower garden and to increase the beauty and plant diversity in unexpected areas.

This recipe has a ratio of 6 parts compost to 1 part clay so you can adjust your quantities to your needs. You’ll need a larger bowl and a spoon. If you want to make separate types of seed bombs, use extra bowls.

1 ½ cups compost

¼ cup dry clay or clay soil

3 to 6 standard size packets of seeds (or 1-3 Tablespoons of seeds, depending on your seed bomb’s intended mission)

Water* have about about 1/3 cup on hand to start

In a large bowl, mix together dry compost and clay. If you want to make different types of seed bombs, scoop some of the mixture into extra bowls. Add a few packets of seeds to your bowl (or bowls). Blend dry ingredients well. Then add water - a tiny bit by bit while stirring until the mixture just starts sticking together. Add enough water to form a stiff mud. It should be the texture of refrigerated cookie dough.

Test one ball to make sure it all stays together (it will be messy on your hands). Roll into balls *as if* you’re making cookies. Size depends on your purpose, but they can be ¼ inch in size to 1 ½ inches or more in diameter. I would recommend making a smaller size (1” or smaller) especially if you intend to dry and store them over a longer period. You can plant or throw them as soon as they are created, wet or dry.

It can take 3 weeks for seedlings to come up, and up to several years for some of the plants to bloom depending on mother nature, also if they are annual or biennial. Perennials will come back year after year and sometimes spread quite a bit (such as peppermint) which is something to keep in mind. Many flowers will re-seed themselves over time if well established.

Which seeds to use? To attract pollinators, any bloom will do. Some *native* plants which attract pollinators are Asters, Milkweed, Goldenrod and Butterfly Weed. Other blooming plants like Bee Balm, Thyme, Peppermint, Cone flower, Zinnia, Sunflower, Chamomile and Cosmos will provide great habitat for the bees, butterflies and tiny beneficial insects. You can use certain vegetable seeds, if that's what you've got and it makes sense for you. You can use leafy greens which will flower and re-seed, also chives and other alliums (which have lovely flowers). If these are in safe soil areas, you can also eat them of course.

Seed bombs can also help restore plant diversity and the natural fertility of spent or disturbed areas. You can work toward restoring entire tracts of land (a traditional use of seed bombs) by throwing large balls including seeds for plants that act as living mulch and soil conditioners which will improve the soil over time. Some examples are Clover, Rye grass, Alfalfa, Oats or Wild Mustard.

Do try to avoid plants that are known to be invasive in Connecticut, as they can do more harm than good over the long run. A comprehensive list of invasives in CT can be found at Invasives.org - <https://www.invasive.org/species/list.cfm?id=66>

Where to plant: Any area that gets some sun and moisture is a safe bet. When planting in weedy areas on roadsides or between properties, it's good to get these started earlier in the season as the growth of all the usual varieties of roadside weeds will crowd out much of the light for germination by late spring... also shoot for the edges of these dense areas. Open fields are good, and areas of your yard that you don't mow as much, such as the far edges and wilder parts will work well with conscientious maintenance. Intentional plantings of seed bombs in a prepared spot in the garden is also a great option, you can sprinkle some soil on top and water them during the dry weeks.

As an act of hope, I encourage you to throw a few seed bombs in truly barren areas, near underpasses or at the end of the driveway... in the wild areas in between everything and on the sides of the road.

Where not to plant: An area where *nothing* grows is usually this way for a reason, and may not be the best place to throw your seed bombs. Some areas are frequently washed out, excessively dry, or are too sandy, or even toxic. Also try not to throw seed bombs in a manicured landscape or in a spot that is mowed frequently or sprayed by herbicides or pesticides.