

# SEED BALLS

## Prepare to plant using clay and sensory play

### What you'll need:

- 1-2 parts untreated seeds of native plants
- 2 parts potting soil
- 5 parts ceramic pottery clay or dried, powdered air-dry clay\*
- 1 part compost (optional)
- Water as needed
- A bowl
- A tray

\*To prepare air-dry clay for this activity, leave it out of the packaging for about 3 days and then grind it into a fine powder using a hammer or mallet. Ask a grownup for help with this—and don't forget your protective eyewear!

### Activity setup:

1. Mix together the seeds, potting soil, clay and compost (if using) in a bowl.
2. Slowly add a few drops of water until a thick paste forms. Add the water slowly—if you add too much, your mixture will become very goey!
3. Use your hands to roll the clay mixture into balls that are about 2-3 cm in size.
4. Place the seed balls on a tray and leave them to dry for at least 24 hours.

### How to play:

Once your seed balls have dried, you're ready to plant! There's no need to bury or water your seed balls. Simply toss them in a bare area of your garden and watch your plants grow. No outdoor garden? No problem! Place your seed balls in planter pots instead. If you're not ready to use them yet, you can store your seed balls in a cardboard box or paper bag.

### How does it work?

Planting with seed balls is an ancient Japanese practice called 粘土団子 (nendo dango), meaning "earth dumpling." During the modern era, Japanese microbiologist Masanobu Fukuoka popularized this method of sustainable farming.

The potting soil provides nutrients for the seeds to **germinate**, which means to sprout or grow. The clay acts as a carrier for the seeds and soil. It protects the seeds from being blown away by wind and from being eaten by animals. Once the temperature is right and there is enough rainfall, your seeds will sprout and grow where they landed!

### What type of seeds should you use?

Fill your seed balls with seeds from wildflowers, herbs or vegetables. You can collect the seeds from your favourite plants and foods or buy them from a local nursery. Be sure to use seeds for plants that are native to your region. In Southern Ontario, these include milkweed, aster and black-eyed Susan, all of which provide nutrients for bees and other pollinators.

To learn more about native and invasive plant species in your region, check out these links from the [Toronto and Region Conservation Authority](#), the [Ontario Invasive Plant Council](#), [Ontario Nature](#) and the [Canadian Wildlife Federation](#).

