

# Recycled Paper Seed Balls

The concept of seed balls is accredited to Masanobu Fukuoko, a Japanese farmer and philosopher who developed the basic formula of mixing clay with humus or compost, and seeds.

A seed ball is a small object that packs seeds together with a growing medium- in this case, old recycled paper. Once complete, the seed ball is buried below a layer of dirt so the seeds can grow.



You can make seed balls into just about any shape using your hands or a pre-designed mold such as cookie cutter, baking tin, silicone mold, etc.

## Materials Needed

- Old paper with all additives removed (*NO* paper clips, staples, tape, plastic & avoid glossy paper)
- Seeds (wildflower, herbs, and annuals help feed the bees and birds)
- Large bucket or plastic bin for soaking paper
- Used, old blender or food processor
- A few bowls or containers for straining water and paper seed mixing
- Colander, strainer, or cheese cloth
- Paper towels or sponge for blotting off excess water
- Drying rack or newspaper
- *Optional:* paper shredder
- *Optional:* cookie cutters, muffin tins, ice cube tray, etc.

## Directions

1. Gather up the paper you want to reuse to make seed balls. You can use old newspaper, old worksheets from school or work, junk mail, paper towels, etc.
2. Tear up paper into small pieces or run paper through a paper shredder. Place paper into a large bucket or bin.
3. Fill the bucket or bin with water just enough to cover all the paper. Mix paper around with your hands and let the paper soak for at least 15 minutes. This allows the paper to bring in moisture and break down. For best results, let paper soak overnight.
4. After soaking, in small batches, put paper into a blender or processor. Fill blender or processor 1/3 with paper and add water 1-2 inches above the paper.



**Tip:** You can add color to your seed mixture by either using colored paper or adding food coloring to your mixture (wear gloves if food coloring is added).

**Tip:** Don't waste water. Recycle the water used during pre-soaking for the blending/pulping process.

### **WARNING:**

An adult should be present at all times or do the blending on their own while children observe.

5. Blend paper until paper resembles oatmeal and is pulped. The more you blend, the better it holds together.

6. Place colander or strainer inside a bowl. Pour pulp mixture into the colander or strainer to drain off water. Pulp should be damp but not dripping wet. Some water is good as it helps the pulp mixture stay together while making shapes. Reuse the water for blending the rest of your paper. Continue with steps 4-5 until all pre-soaked paper is blended.



7. Pour contents from colander or strainer into a separate bowl. Now it's time to add your seeds. Any seeds can be used; however, seeds native to your area will help ensure growth and attract local pollinators. Pour seeds into your pulp mixture. Knead and mix the seeds into the pulp mixture with your hands.



**Tip:** Cinnamon and turmeric are antimicrobial and help inhibit fungal disease and insect pests. When adding seeds, Add 1 teaspoon of each to your overall mix to aid in plant health.

8. Making your seed balls

**For younger children:** grab a small handful of mixture, squeeze out as much water as can, roll it into a firm ball or squish into a pancake. Place on drying rack or stack of newspapers to dry.



**For older children:** place mixture into cookie cutters, baking tins, etc. Press the pulp firmly and use paper towels or sponge to remove any excess water (save paper towels for next batch of seed balls). Carefully remove from molds and place on drying rack or put on stack of newspapers to dry.



**Tip:** You do not want your seeds to germinate, so make sure as much water is removed prior to drying. Pulp mix should be damp- not soaked. If any part breaks off, you can mold it back in place by adding water and more pulp mix- kind of like play dough.

9. Drying Time. Depending on the size of your shapes, it could take up to 3 days to completely dry. Once cool to the touch, they are done drying.

**Tip:** Placing them in the sun on a hot day will speed up the process. **Do not** put in the oven, dehydrator, or microwave to speed drying- this will kill the seeds and stop germination.

10. After seed balls are dry, they are ready to be planted in a planter or ground or given as a gift.

→ Cover seed balls with at least 1/8 inch of planting soil or ground soil and water daily.

