



## DIRECTIONS FOR CLEANING SOFT-BERRIED SEEDS

By Heather Koni Pass

**Equipment:** Waterproof apron, water source at work table, several buckets, food processor, duct tape, large sieve, clean stir stick, several clean-up rags, fine-meshed screens, clean newspaper, fan, small plastic flower pots

- Put one or two layers of duct tape on blades of food processor; one for small seeds (Rubus-raspberries) and two for larger seeds (Oemleria-Indian plum).
- Put a small amount of berries in the food processor, fill with cool water.
- Holding hand over spout, pulse several times until a slurry forms.
- Fill a bucket ½ full of cool water. Pour slurry into bucket of water and swirl around. Unviable seeds and berry mush will float to the surface. Viable seeds will sink to the bottom of the bucket. Set sieve over another bucket.
- Slowly pour swirly water through sieve, stopping before the clean seeds are poured out of the first bucket. If cleaning fine seeds, line a screen with clean newspaper. Omit newspaper for large seeds. Retrieve clean seeds from first bucket and spear on screen.
- Examine stuff in sieve. If you feel there are enough seeds remaining in slurry dregs, repeat processing. Repeat this process until all fruits are seeded.
- When you have completed the screening process put the screens of cleaned seeds in a well-ventilated space to dry. Stand a flowerpot under each corner to ensure good ventilation. Cover with a second screen so they don't become mouse treats! Stir gently several times a day while drying. Fanning a fan in this area will help the drying process.
- If seeds stick together while drying, simply rub through your hands occasionally to separate. Plant out or store in fridge/freezer.

Some native plant with soft-berried seeds/husks:

Amelanchier alnifolia-saskatoon; Arctostaphylos uva-ursi-kinnikinnick; Cornus canadensis-bunchberry; Cornus stolonifera, red-osier dogwood; Crataegus douglasii-black hawthorn; Elaeagnus cummutata-wolf willow; Gaultheria shallon-salal; Juniperus communis-common juniper; Lonicera spp-honeysuckles; Mahonia spp- Oregon grapes; Oemleria cerasiformis-Indian plum; Rhamnus purshiana-cascara; Ribes spp-currants; Rosa spp-roses; Rubus spp-raspberries; Sambucus spp-elderberries; Sorbus spp-mountain ash family; Synphoricarpos spp-snowberries; Vaccinium spp-huckleberries



## **DIRECTIONS FOR DRY SEED CLEANING**

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### **FLUFFY SEED HEADS** e.g. *Holodiscus discolor*, *Spirea douglasii*

You will need: sturdy gardening gloves, sieve of a size to allow seeds to pass thru, ice cream bucket, newspaper, small plastic bags, labels.

With gloves on, take small handfuls of seed heads and rub between your hands over a newspaper to separate seeds and chaff. Then put this into sieve and sift. Save and label seeds, discard chaff.

### **CAPSULES & PODS** e.g. *Penstemon*, *Rhododendron* & *Lathyrus*

You will need: sturdy gardening gloves, rolling pin, large screen with mesh of size to let seeds pass thru, newspaper, small plastic bags, labels.

With gloves on, put a handful of capsules or pods on screen on newspaper. GENTLY crush capsules/pods with rolling pin. Shake seeds thru screen. Save and label seeds. Discard chaff.

\*With many pods, which curl open when dry, it is just as easy to flick the seeds out with your fingers.

### **CONES** e.g. *Alnus*, *Abies*, *Picea*

You will need: face mask, paper grocery bag, and sieve of size large enough to allow seeds to pass thru.

When cleaning *Alnus* cones, wear a face mask as I've found them to be allergenic.

Put cones in paper bag and shake vigorously. Pour bag contents into sieve and sift seeds thru. Save and label seeds. Use cones for decorating.

If you want to paint *alnus* cones, put cones in a paper bag, spray paint into bag and shake. Dry on blank newsprint.

### **WINGED SEEDS** e.g. *Acer*

You will need: sturdy gloves, newspaper.

Wearing gloves, take small handfuls of maple keys and rub vigorously between your hands over newspaper. Winnow to separate seeds and chaff.

### **WINNOWING**

Sometimes, when separating chunkier seeds from chaff, better results are obtained by winnowing the seeds and chaff. It is easiest to work at a large table.

You will need: broom, dust pan, large plastic sheet to cover table, newspaper to cover plastic, fan, two deep buckets of same height, ice cream bucket.

Cover table with plastic. Cover plastic with newspaper. Place one deep bucket at end of table, up side down. Stand fan on this bucket with head in fixed position, facing down the length of the table. Turn fan on to low speed. Hold your hand in front of the fan so you can judge where the airflow is not too strong. Position the other deep bucket, right side up, at this point in front of the fan.



Put the seeds and chaff in the ice-cream bucket. This will be trial and error. Holding the ice-cream bucket above the deep bucket, slowly pour a little of the contents into the deep bucket. If positioning is correct, the heavier seeds will fall into the deep bucket and the chaff will blow onto the table. If the air current is too strong and everything blows onto the table, simply scoop up the mixture, move the deep bucket a little further away from the fan and try again. With some experience, it becomes easy to judge the distance from the fan.

### **GROWING QUERCUS AND CORYLUS**

While I have only grown Garry Oak, I think this method should also apply to Hazelnut.

You will need: seeds, bucketful of water, two screens of same size with two pieces of black landscape cloth to match screens, weights or clamps to hold screens together ... and later, 1 gal. pots full of leafy compost.

Put all seeds in bucket of water and soak for a while (overnight is good). Seeds that sink are viable. Throw the floaters away where critters can eat them. This will also drown any worms in the seeds. Put a layer of landscape cloth on a screen. Spread seeds on this. Lay second layer of cloth over seeds. Put second screen on top. Weigh or clamp all together so seeds don't become critter snacks. Put this package on table in greenhouse or in shady spot outdoors. Water 3-4 times daily. As seeds sprout, transfer to pots of soil, ensuring that soil is gently tamped down while not damaging the sprout. Put one seed per pot. Water pot to ensure good contact between soil and seed. Continue to water regularly. Seedlings will remain in this pot until sold or ready to plant out carefully, taking care to not damage the root. If you have only a handful of seeds, sprouting can be done in a canning jar with screen on top, as if sprouting seeds. I find the cupboard under the kitchen sink is a good, dark, warm spot.