

Native Flower Seed Ball Activity

Seed balls are marble or gumball-sized balls made of clay, soil, and seeds that are used to replant areas where the natural flora has been destroyed. Once dry, the seed balls can be thrown in open fields and lots to help replant abandoned areas with native flowers that support pollinator species such as bees, butterflies, and birds.

You will need:

- Newspaper
- Seeds of your choice (organic recommended) some suggested flower seeds are: Echinacea (cone flower), Swamp Sunflower, Black Eyed Susan
- Potting Mix- organic is best, avoid Miracle Grow
- Clay: powdered, dried clumps, or prepared, Crayola white air-dry clay works well

You can usually find the seeds and the soil at any home improvement store or greenhouse. The clay is available at any craft store like Michael's. All materials are also available online.

Steps:

1. Lay out newspaper to contain any mess that is made and make clean up easy
 - a. Divide small handful chunks of clay (a butter knife or something similar to help "cut" the clay), and about 1/4 cup of soil (using a dry measuring cup works well)
2. Knead the clay and soil together as best as you can. It should look like a crushed up oreo, maybe not as dark, then roll marble/gumball- sized balls. The clay soil mix should be able to be rolled into smooth balls, but not sticky. If it's too sticky, mix in some sifted compost until you have the right consistency.
3. Smush the clay soil balls into flat pancakes, sprinkle more soil into the middle, add 2 or 3 seeds, then make into a pouch/close the pancake and shape it into a ball
4. Once formed, the seed balls should be left out to dry until hardened. They can then be brought on walks and thrown in woodland areas or abandoned lots. Areas with open patches of land containing little grass and plants and that receive sunlight are ideal.

Echinacea, Black Eyed Susans, and Swamp Sunflower are native perennial plants to Southeastern PA. Being a native plant means that they originated in this region and are adapted to the climate here. Native species can survive in natural habitats with little supervision from humans since they are already adjusted to the temperature, rain, and drought levels typical of Southeastern PA.

These plants are also perennials, meaning once they are planted they will come back each year, making them favorites among the bees, bugs, birds, bats, and butterflies that live here. Make these seed balls to spread plants around your neighborhood or plant them directly in soil on your property to help provide habitat resources for declining pollinator populations.

