

Holiday Nuts Have Arrived

By Joseph Parish



After a myriad of months aimlessly searching through multiple grocery stores, and moving pointlessly from aisle to aisle, I have finally located the holiday mixed nut assortment. The nuts in question are the popular bags packaged by the Diamond Company of California. These bags contain Almonds, Brazil Nuts, Hazelnuts, Pecans, and Walnuts, all the widespread nuts exploited for filling the holiday nut baskets found in the home. Sadly, these nut packages only seem to be available during the holiday season. Equipped with this small package of nuts, I am prepared to attack the upcoming tree growing process with open arms and a smile on my face. I personally enjoy growing trees and this holiday assortment provides me with the opportunity to propagate these nut varieties each season.

In order to propagate nut trees, the seeds must receive several months of winter-like temperatures. This denotes that in order to simulate the same conditions found in nature, I must assign my seeds to the refrigerator for a period of time. If a seed fails to receive this winter-like stratification, it will not propagate, or if it does it will be a long drawn out affair. Seeds need sufficient amount of moisture, the proper temperature, and a measure of oxygen in order to properly germinate. As keepers of the seeds it becomes our responsibility to provide these requirements.

When I am ready to stratify my nut seeds, I place them in a large Ziploc bag with some moistened peat moss. A word of caution is in order here, do not make the peat moss so wet that water remains in the bag, or mold will likely form. Next, I place the plastic bags into the refrigerator, ensuring that I am only putting it in the refrigerator and not the freezer. I do not wish to freeze the nuts, but merely to place them in cold storage. After a minimum of two months, I remove the bag of nuts from the cold storage and place them on the counter to allow them to adjust to room temperature.

Since I will not be planting the seeds outdoors until the month of May, I will leave them in there until that time. When as I plant them, I will place the seeds in the ground at a depth of 2-3 inches. There is no right way to place the seed into the ground, as it will sprout regardless of the way it is planted. The seed knows no up or down direction. Once the seed starts to grow, it will orientate itself as it begins to grow. After planting the seed, I will water the area immediately so as to ensure a good soil to seed contact, after which my goal is to keep the area properly moistened.

When the seeds are ready to sprout, they will. I can sit there in front of them and beg them to sprout, but they will grow when they feel like it. Some may sprout in just a few weeks, while others may take their time, and not sprout until the middle of summer. Of interest is the fact that some varieties such as certain hazels or black walnuts generally can take as long as two years.

It is important that once placed the site should be identified and protected. One of the small tree varieties largest predators are chipmunks, squirrels, racoons, mice, opossum, and assorted birds. Our small paw-paw trees we have planted outside this year were eaten up by a deer making his way through our yard. He thought it was a McDonalds walk through, and ate the thing down to the root. Hopefully when spring comes around it will regenerate and grow again. My next course of action is to cover the seeds, and seedlings with chicken wire to protect them from these uninvited guests.

In the case of these nut seeds we may even decide to put them in a tall 2-liter container until they mature enough to go outside completely. We can always place them in the Sunroom throughout the year. If we decide to plant them in containers, then I will likely plant the seeds just below the surface of the soil to give the plant as much root space as necessary. Of course, it goes without saying that I will need to have holes in the bottom of the container to facilitate the proper drainage, and to employ a good quality potting soil. Don't use the common garden soil as it simply does not drain as well. When getting ready to place the soil in the pot, ensure that it is moisten well. Since I can usually start potted plants a month or more, than those placed immediately outside, I can begin planting these nuts as soon as February. Place the pots in a sunny location.