

A simple seed viability test

A home germination test will provide a reliable estimate of the viability of old or saved seeds

1. Obtain a representative sample of your seed – no fewer than 10 seeds
2. Spread a paper towel on the bottom of a sealable container and moisten with water until it is thoroughly damp. Do not dampen to point of runoff or dripping. A plant mister or atomizer works well.
3. Mark the container with the date and variety of seed.
4. Place the seeds in rows on the towel. Make sure you randomly select seeds for your sample; do not cull any damaged, discolored or light seeds, since this will bias your germination test.
5. Seal the container to retain the moisture.
6. Place the container in an area of relatively stable temperature unless otherwise instructed. Avoid areas where direct sunlight with its heating effect strikes the container.
7. Check the container regularly to make sure it hasn't dried out.
8. After the required germination period, count the seeds that have sprouted.
9. Determine the actual percent of germination. (Number of sprouted seeds, divided by total number of seeds, times by 100).

Potential problems and their cause

1. Seed tends to rot — your sample was too wet.
2. Sample dries out — container was improperly sealed.
3. Seeds not left long enough
4. Seeds need light to germinate