



NMBKA

New Mexico Beekeepers Association

nmbeekeepers.org

Seed balls/bombs/clay dumplings, are golf ball or marble sized balls made of clay, earth, (some compost may be added) and seeds, which are used to replant areas where the natural plants have been degraded or destroyed. Oftentimes, unless ideal growing conditions are present, there can be many reasons traditional broadcast seeding is not successful. The seed is often sown on top of the soil where little rain, and hot temperatures exist. It can be blown away by the wind, washed away by heavy rains, or eaten by birds or other small wildlife. Often very little is left to germinate and grow.

Making and placing seed balls addresses all of these problems. When seed balls are tossed, the clay cracks upon impact with the ground and eventually rain will start the germination process. The weight of the seed balls prevents them from being blown away by the wind. The thick clay also protects the seed from the heat of the sun, heavy rains, and may also prevent birds and other nibblers from eating the seed. Compost provides an added boost of nutrition and is a "mini-mulch" that holds moisture. Seed balls also work great on sloped or other hard to reach areas, or along roadsides.

Choosing native plants and wildflower seeds which are self-sufficient and hardy to put in your seed balls will ramp up your chances of success as they can survive where constant care isn't available. Observing the needs of your site will help you determine what types of seeds to include. A basic recipe obtained from the internet is included below.

Making and distributing seed balls is an ideal activity to do with children.

Native Plant Seed Balls

RECIPE FOR SEEDBALLS:

Ingredients:

- 2 parts soil (bagged garden soil or screened soil from your garden)
- 5 parts pottery clay mix from your local art store or natural clay soil found in many states, (NM included)
- 1 part compost
- 1-2 parts water
- 1-2 parts seeds of your choice (See the New Mexico Beekeepers Association's Plant and Seed Source List handout which will also be available online)

Equipment:

- Large tub to mix ingredients (large projects use a cement mixer!)
- Large box/tray or area to dry and store seed balls

Directions:

Mix the soil, clay and 1 part water thoroughly. There should be no lumps. Slowly add more water until the mixture is the consistency of the toy store molding clay that comes in a can.

1. Add seeds. Keep kneading the dough until the seeds are well mixed in. Add more water if necessary.
2. Take small bits of the clay mixture and roll into ball about one inch in diameter. The balls should hold together easily. If they're crumbly, add more water.
3. Dry seed balls for 24-48 hours in a shady place before sowing or storing. They store best in a cardboard box. Do not use plastic bags as the balls will not dry and mold may develop.
4. The last step in how to make flower seed balls is sowing them. Yes, you can place them carefully over the area to be planted or you can gently toss them one at a time. Don't bury them and don't water them. Let nature take its course!

Uses:

Anywhere! In your own yard; or adopt a roadside or vacant lot and sow a buffet for pollinators!

*See NMBKA's Plant and Seed Source List