

Handling Peculiarities of Hardwood Seed - Nut Species

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For the last several years Illinois has been experiencing an accelerated demand for deciduous seedlings. Most of this demand is within the "fine hardwood" species and within this given group are the bulky seeds.

Briefly, I shall describe the procedures we use for two of these seeds and touch on some of the others.

Walnut seedlings are produced at our Northern Nursery but seed is collected state-wide. About one-half the collected nuts are brought to the Southern Nursery for stock piling, hulling and transferring to the Mason Nursery.

We hold the unhulled nuts at air temperature storage in temporary pits, striving to keep the nuts from being piled too deep and stirring occasionally to prevent heating. When ever quantities are sufficient we hull, float, and either bag or stock pile the clean nuts. The nuts are then transported to the Mason Nursery for fall sowing or plastic bag stratification. One note of interest and importance is stratifying the nuts for spring shipment and/or seeding.

During question and answer period Hugh might elaborate.

All in all, handling of Walnuts is not a difficult or particularly hard job as long as one is careful not to allow them to heat in either the fresh or hulled state.

White Oak requires about the same caution as Walnuts with one great exception, and that is timing and speed of collection. As most know, White Oak during a damp fall will sprout even on the trees.

Our White Oak acorns are collected as they fall or in some cases as they ripen enough to flail from the trees. As they are brought to the Nursery, they are floated if needed and immediately placed into cold storage. In the past few years where our collection will run.

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close to 7,000 lbs. , we simply dump the acorns on the floor of a refrigerator room, stir and if needed dampen them.

In some cases we will still get some sprouting prior to seeding. If these radicals are not over 1/4 or 3/8 of an inch we have sown them with good success.

The handling of Pin Oak, Red Oak, Cherrybark Oak, Hickory, Pecan, Willow Oak, Black Oak and Chestnut present very few problems. As long as one collects as soon as possible, sows immediately or holds in cold storage temporarily all major problems are avoided,

One other species which might briefly be considered, although not a true nut specie, is Bald Cypress. Cypress is a rather interesting tree native to Southern Illinois which during wet planting seasons is used rather heavily. Cypress seed is collected after it has semi-dried on the tree. Further drying is necessary after collecting and maximum storage moisture should be below 13%. Stratification is necessary to break dormancy. This is rather easily accomplished by soaking the seed in untreated water, at air temperature for at least 45 days. Immediate sowing and covering of the seed and keeping the seed beds moist will assure maximum germination.