



“Cold/Moist Treat”: Fooling Mother Nature, but just a little.

“Cold stratification” is a term that describes what a seed goes through in a winter out in the field. Seeds of native perennial plants need to go through this as a signal that it is truly spring now and the proper time to germinate, not just an Indian Summer or warm spell. It is one of Mother Nature’s survival tactics for prairie plants.

When seeds are gathered for future planting, they have not been through a winter or any “cold stratification”. This is good, because they are waiting, and can be stored for long periods of time with minimal mortality. But to germinate after planting, this seed must go through “cold stratification.” This can be either a real winter, or “Cold/Moist Treating,” which is an artificial way to “cold stratify” seed, and it’s easy.

In a suitable container, mix the seed with moist sand (not dripping wet, about the consistency of cookie dough). Place the container in your refrigerator for 4 to 6 weeks (Hint: label it – you have no idea how often some hungry person ... well, you get the idea). After this, the seed thinks it’s been through a winter and is ready to grow.