

Growing Aloes From Seed

When growing Aloe's from seed there is one important consideration to bear in mind, the seed must be fresh. The germ in Aloe seed is oil based (whereas in most plants it is starch based) and consequently the life of the seed is short. The seed provided here is fresh and as such should produce excellent results.

With the vast majority of succulent plant seeds the key words are Warm, Close and Bright. Sow the seeds on the top of a good quality compost and water (spraying is best) with a dilute fungicide solution (Chinosol or a copper based compound). Seal in a plastic bag and place somewhere warm and light (20 – 30 Deg C).

Germination given ideal conditions as listed above should take 5 – 21 days. Some species can take longer and for these you will need to give them a period of cold immediately after sowing (**Aloe polyphylla** in particular need 4 weeks in the fridge). Once germination occurs you will see a small pointed, single seed leaf emerge from the seed.

Growth is quite fast and by the end of the first year you should have plants that look like miniature Aloes. Pot up when large enough into good quality cactus compost. Flowering can occur in some species from the 3rd summer onwards, but many, especially the larger types take considerably longer to reach flowering maturity.

The flowers are borne on spikes either loosely or in dense flower heads. Many resemble red hot poker, to which the genus Aloe is related.

Some species are almost hardy, especially those from the inland, higher altitude habitats. – see below for specific instructions for these aloes.

Germinating High Altitude Aloes

Aloes from high altitude locations such as **Aloe polyphylla** can often experience winter snow and frost in their habitat. Seed germination in these species occurs under such conditions and it would be fatal for the seeds to germinate under frosty or snowy conditions, so they have an inbuilt dormant period that allows the seed to germinate only when the conditions are right. So the seeds in cultivation need a process called stratification to break their dormancy. This is a simple process but this is critical to your success with getting these seeds to grow.

Sow the seeds as normal in a pot of cactus compost and water lightly. Seal the pot in a polythene bag and place this in the fridge (not the freezer). Keep the pot in the fridge for 4 – 5 weeks and then take out and place in a propagator or somewhere warm and bright. If the seeds do not germinate in 4 – 5 weeks (so now a total of 10 weeks) place them back in the fridge for a further cold period of 4 weeks and then bring back out.