

### Growing Cycads from Seed

Much has been written about growing cycads from seed and one can find a lot of varying advice on the Internet concerning this subject. The following is the result of reading much of that information, followed by trial and error (lots of error it must be said) in order to give you the best advice I can.

1. First priority, the seed must be fresh – I only sell fresh seed, I know it to be fresh because I have either collected it myself or it has been collected for me.
2. When you receive the seed, clean it of all flesh (if any has been left on), as leaving this on will delay germination and may lead to rot.
3. Having cleaned the seed, soak it in tepid water for 2 – 5 days, the larger/drier the seed, the longer the soaking period. Change the water daily or more if it is discoloured.
4. At the last change of water add a copper based fungicide at the recommended strength for seedlings or use Chinosol. (I have used both with equally good results). Good results are also reported for diluted Neem oil. It may well be that the seeds will germinate whilst soaking – in this case skip straight to point 7.
5. For the sowing medium I use Vermiculite. This should be dampened and I mean dampened (approx 30 – 50 ml (boiling) of water per litre of vermiculite). Place the seed and (cooled off) vermiculite in a Ziplock bag, seal and place somewhere warm and dark, I use the airing cupboard (my wife complains bitterly – so I usually hide the bag somewhere out of reach).
6. Leave it all alone for a week, then regularly check (every few days) for signs of germination. The root will come first and may precede the leaf by many weeks.
7. As the seeds germinate, remove them to a gritty, moist peat mix compost in a standard pot. Place one per pot as they have fragile roots and all subsequent potting on/up should be done with as little root disturbance as possible. Leave the seed on, it will rot when the plant has ‘done’ with it.
8. The plants will make slow but steady progress and the number of leaves produced per season will depend on the species and should be stated in the listing. Bigger seeds will of course produce bigger initial leaves and may well be usable in a year or so as a houseplant. If planting out, then this should occur when all traces of the seed have gone (perhaps 2 years in small species, longer in the larger species such as Cycas or Dioon)

Best of luck, remember though at all stages hygiene is the key, once a mould gets hold of your seeds you may as well start over – again I’ve been there.