

Growing Gardenia and Rothmannia from seed

These instructions incorporate the latest recommendations from Kirstenbosch. The seed capsules of both Gardenia and the related Rothmannia are extremely hard and it takes considerable effort to extract the ripe seed. That said the seed, although ripe, may not be ready to germinate. To speed things up the following is recommended.

Soak the seed for 24 hours prior to sowing in luke warm water, changing it frequently. As a final treatment mist spray the seed thoroughly by placing it in a sieve or tea-strainer and spray with hot water for 10 minutes.

The next step is optional, it has worked for me, but I have not been able to compare results against a control group. Mix a small amount of burnt charcoal (from lumpwood – not briquettes) in to the potting mix. The idea here is to simulate the aftermath of a bush fire – a precursor to rapid germination of many Savannah plants.

Sow at ¼” deep in good quality seed compost, preferably in singly. Seal in Ziploc bags and place somewhere warm and bright at 25 – 30 Deg C. Germination should take 14 – 42 days (longer if the treatment failed). The seed can take 18 months to germinate if the dormancy has not been broken, so don't give up.

Pot on as required, this has a medium/fast growth rate and it can be restricted by pot culture. It resents over watering, so water it once thoroughly then let it dry out before watering it again. Water logging will cause root damage and your plant will fail to thrive.

The plant is evergreen and flowering is triggered by changes in day length, so a plant kept in a living room all year is not likely to flower. A better location is a conservatory or greenhouse. If a windowsill is the only option, choose a room that is unoccupied for much of the day (where the lights aren't always on).