

Germinating Large Or Hard Seeds

By *Jesse Glessner*

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Typically one just soaks seeds overnight and then plants in either a peat pot or in the soil. However, some gourd seeds need a bit of special care if you wish to have higher germination rates. Larger seeds, in particular take a long time to pop open the pod when germinating after planting.

The Bushel 100 + in the IGS Seed Inventory is just one of those (pictured below). To prep for germination you should sand the white flutes off on both sides down to the brown of the seed. It isn't necessary to sand off the top of the seed. Take care not to sand into the brown portion. If other large seeds have the flutes you can sand those off or you can just score the surface if none are present. Much of getting the germination process started is to soak the seeds overnight.



After sanding you may want to also score the surface of the Bushel 100 + seed with a sharp knife, again, being careful not to go too far down into the brown "meat" of the seed. This will help the seed pod crack open more readily when the germination process starts.

DO NOT score into the tip of any seed!

Soak the seeds overnight and then you may either start the germination process in the peat pot, or, if you want to assure higher germination try placing the seed on a thoroughly rinsed paper towel that has been folded in half. Place the seeds on only one half of the dampened (not dripping) folded towel, then fold the other half over the seeds. Place the towel in a sealable plastic bag and assure a temperature of 80⁰ F for 2-3 days, checking on seeds each day.

As soon as you see the seed pod opening it is ready to be put into a pot or the soil. NEVER tamp down on the soil after you pull it over the seed. Water will move the soil down around the seed. Just make sure and keep the prepared pots warm while plants continue to grow.

Another very hard seed is the very tiny black seed of the Ball Luffa. You should hold these seeds with a set of tweezers and score one side of the seed before starting to soak overnight.

If you wish to try something different with some of your seeds, no matter the variety, try soaking half of them in a Hydrogen Peroxide solution overnight and check the resulting seed germination and growth against those soaked in water.

Also, you might want to try starting some seed in Peat Pots and plant others of the same varieties directly into the soil when temperatures are good for planting. Plant both, with identifications, on the same day and watch the growth of both.

If you are planting your seeds in a permanent location, directly into the soil, the soil temperature should be around 50⁰F-55⁰F, which, in Indiana, is usually around the end of the third week in May. Your plants should also be planted at those ground temperatures AFTER they have been hardened. Good luck with your gourds!