

How to Grow a Palo Verde Tree From a Seed

Palo verde trees (*Cercidium* spp.) occur naturally across the southwestern United States, where they add a splash of golden color to the desert landscape in late winter. Species such as the blue palo verde (*C. floridum*) and yellow palo verde (*C. microphyllum*) thrive within U.S. Department of Agriculture plant hardiness zones 8 to 10, where they are sometimes added to landscaping as a drought-tolerant, low-maintenance ornamental. All palo verde species propagate best from seed, which will germinate rapidly once sown in moist, fast-draining soil. However, scarification is necessary to hasten sprouting and increase the overall germination rate.

1

Gather palo verde seeds in late summer or early autumn after pods dry out and turn light brown. Shake the seed pod and listen for a rattling sound, which indicates that the seeds have fully dried out. Collect one or two seed pods.

2

Snip off the ends of the seed pods with pruning shears and pry them open to extract the seeds. Pick out the flat, light brown seeds. Inspect each seed for signs of pest damage or mold. Discard any that have obvious signs of damage.

3

Nick the end of each palo verde seed with a utility knife. Press the blade against the seed coat until it is deeply incised but not completely punctured. Soak the nicked seeds in warm water overnight to further weaken the hard, impermeable seed coat.

4

Prepare a planting container for each palo verde seed. Use 7-inch plastic pots with at least two drainage holes at the base. Fill the pots with a mixture of 2 parts coarse sand, 1 part compost and 1 part perlite. Add water to the mixture until it feels moderately moist in the top 2 inches.

5

Sow one palo verde seed in each pot. Make a planting hole that is 1/4 to 1 inch deep. Place the seed inside the hole and cover it with a loose layer of the growing mixture. Spread a 1/4-inch-thick layer of mulch over the surface to help hold moisture in the soil.

6

Place the pots inside a lightly shaded cold frame. Warm the pots to around 70 degrees Fahrenheit using a germination mat. Check the moisture level in the growing mixture each morning. Add water whenever it feels barely damp in the top 1/2 inch.

7

Watch for the first seedlings in approximately one to two weeks. Remove the germination mat once the seeds sprout. Continue to water whenever the growing mixture dries out in the top 1/2 inch.

8

Grow the palo verde seedlings in a very lightly shaded area of the garden during their first summer. Provide 1 inch of water each week during the summer months. Acclimate the palo verde seedlings to direct sun in late summer so they won't wilt after transplant.

9

Transplant the palo verde saplings into a permanent bed in early autumn after the first rainfall. Choose a sunny planting site with sandy, fast-draining soil. Space multiple trees at least 20 feet apart.

Things You Will Need

- Pruning shears
- Utility knife
- 7-inch plastic pots
- Coarse sand
- Compost
- Perlite
- Mulch
- Cold frame
- Germination mat

<http://paloverdetree.com>