

GENERAL PROPAGATION TIPS OF AUSTRALIAN NATIVES

The growing medium

A good medium both for seed raising and for subsequent potting-on consists of 80-85% washed river sand and 15 - 20% peat moss. This mix has been used successfully by many growers over a long period although, given the environmental problems associated with peat extraction, an artificial peat moss would most likely be substituted by many propagators. There are a number of these "artificial" peats available made from waste products such as coconut fibre. Of course, commercial seed raising mixes can also be used. The medium should be reasonably moist before sowing the seed.

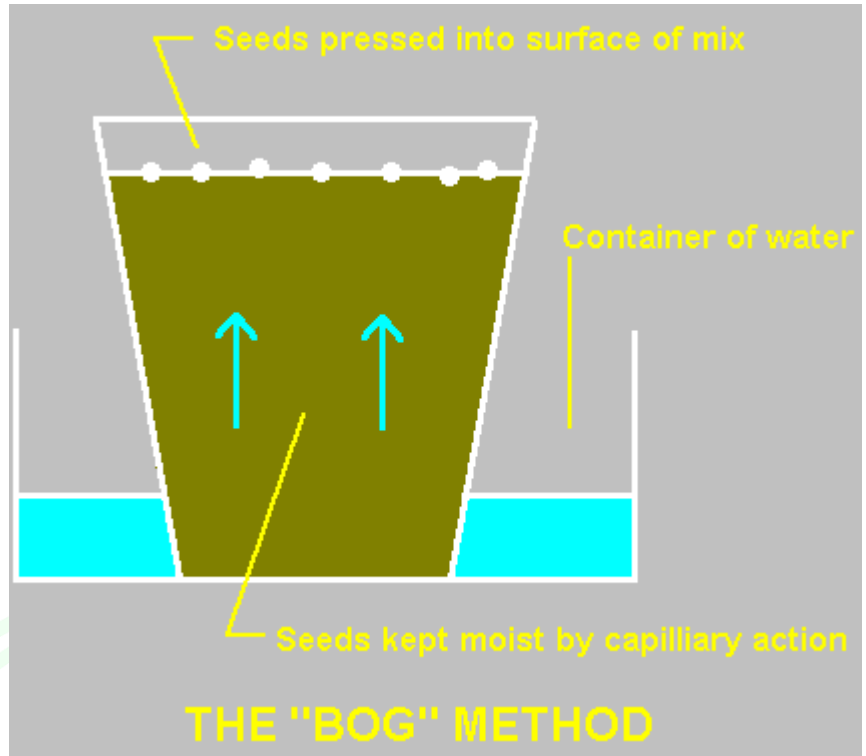
Planting the seed

Seed can be sown into punnets, small pots or tubes and is normally covered to a depth of about double the seed diameter. Fine seed is usually sprinkled over the surface of the seed mix and need only be pressed down firmly onto the mix without being actually covered. Large seed needs to be well spaced to facilitate later transplanting. The use of individual tubes is an advantage when only small quantities of plants are required. This allows large seed to be sown one to a tube while fine seed can be thinned out as germination occurs to leave the strongest single seedling.

Care and attention

After sowing, the seed bed needs to be kept moist and sheltered from drying winds and from rain. Some sunlight is an advantage. With overhead watering, a fine spray is necessary to avoid damage to small seedlings. A good method of watering for small quantities of seed is the use of a capillary bed (as shown in the diagram). With this arrangement, overhead watering is not needed and the seed and seedlings can be left unattended for 2 or 3 days (up to a week or more in cooler weather). The seed mix in the containers needs to be fairly moist before the containers are placed in the capillary bed otherwise the capillary action may not occur.

A similar method is the so-called "bog method" where the pot containing the seed is placed into a saucer of water until germination occurs. A common method used for germination of *Melaleuca* and related plants is the "bog method" where the pot containing the seeds is placed into a saucer of water until germination occurs. This results in moisture reaching the seeds by capillary action and ensures that the seeds do not dry out.



PLANTING SEEDS AND FERTILIZING SEEDS

