



Coastal
Foodways

GERMINATION TEST

WHAT IS A GERMINATION TEST?

A germination test is a simple way to test whether your old seeds are still viable! Seeds have a shelf life that varies depending on the type of seed and how it was stored.

When seeds get old, it's impossible to tell by looking at them whether they'll still germinate (develop and sprout), and this is where a quick germination test can help.

We recommend doing germination tests a month or more before you'd typically begin planting for your gardening season!

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

- Seeds
- Paper towel
- A plastic bag
- Water

WHAT'S THE METHOD?

Lay out a double layer of paper towel, then place seeds on the paper towel spaced about 1 cm apart.

Gently roll or fold the paper towel and apply enough water to thoroughly moisten (but not soak) the paper towel. Then seal the damp paper towel inside the plastic bag with a bubble of air.

After 4-7 days, open the bag and unroll the paper towel to count how many of the seeds have sprouted!

HOW TO CALCULATE THE GERMINATION RATE

Your germination rate is determined by how many of your seeds sprout. For example, if you lay out 10 seeds in the paper towel and 6 of them sprout, you know (using the formula below) that 60% of your seeds are viable.

$$\frac{\# \text{ seeds sprouted} \times 100}{\# \text{ seeds tested}} = \text{Germination rate \%}$$

$$\frac{6 \times 100}{10} = 60\%$$

This can help you to plan your planting when you're using old seeds. If the germination rate is low, you'll want to put several seeds in each pod to increase your chances. If the germination rate is high, you'll be able to plan for success and spread your seeds more thinly!