



GROWING NEEM FROM SEEDS

A native of India, neem is an extraordinarily hardy tree that thrives in ecosystems ranging from the Sahara Desert to the wet salty environment of the Florida Keys. The only pests known to harm it are directly related to overwatering: slugs (which are mollusks not insects) and several strains of root rot.

In Florida and other tropical climates, neem quickly becomes a valuable shade tree, growing up to eight feet per year under optimum conditions. In colder climates, neem trees can easily be grown in large pots as highly decorative houseplants, repelling pests such as scale and spider mites that can kill common indoor plants like ficus or palm trees.

The single most important thing you can do to ensure the success of these seeds is to PLANT THEM NOW! Like many tropical trees that thrive in regions where cold is not an issue – but voracious insects are – neem seeds are in a race against time the minute they ripen.

We ship seeds in sterile potting soil in case they sprout *en route* to their destination. For best results, have pots or a large flat waiting for their arrival so you can plant them as soon as possible. If you don't have a compost pile or favorite potting soil, ask your local nursery to recommend their best soil for houseplants. Avoid water-absorbing polymers. Please don't use soil from your yard unless you're an expert gardener and know exactly what you're doing.

Fill a pot or flat with soil, then water well. Place the neem seeds on top of the damp soil and cover with just enough soil so that the seed is no longer visible. You don't need to water again until the soil is dry at least an inch deep. The easiest way to kill a neem seedlings – or tree – is to overwater. Try to put in a spot where it gets morning but not afternoon sun until it's growing well. They also prefer shelter from high winds and heavy rain until they have time to develop a good root system but they will handle full sun and heavy rain once they're established.

Transplant into larger pots as they grow, since they're like goldfish and will only get as big as their pots allow. They're heavy feeders and must be fertilized regularly. We use a balanced organic fertilizer, but you may use a chemical product. Follow directions exactly – you will kill the tree if they get too many nutrients.

You will need to bring your seedlings inside before temperatures drop below about 35 degrees. Put them in your sunniest window and provide supplemental light in the evening. Like many tropical plants, neem trees are day-length sensitive and will stop growing in short winter days. It doesn't take much to fool them into thinking it's still summer though – a nearby living room light is fine.

Please feel free to call with questions on these directions!

Stay Healthy and Happy,

Vicki Parsons