

## Sowing *Lycoris* Seed

*Lycoris* is a relatively ephemeral seed in that after maturation and dispersal in October/November, it spends several days to weeks on the ground surface after which a root radicle emerges and penetrates moist soil. In nature, humid and mostly moist conditions are needed for successful germination. If conditions are not right for germination, the seed will dry out soon after. So, this seed cannot be stored for too long and would not survive into the next season for later germination.

The seeds you are receiving were harvested in October/November and stored in the refrigerator in plastic sandwich bags containing moistened and squeezed (to remove excess moisture) sphagnum moss. You are likewise receiving each labeled package in a zip sealed plastic bag with a minimum of moss to maintain humidity while in transit.

THESE SEEDS NEED TO BE PLANTED AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE.

If these are being planted in USDA Hardiness Zone 7-8, you can disperse on open ground, but this mimic of nature will also expose your seed to all the drawbacks related to the whims of weather.

No matter your hardiness zone, I recommend you use germination medium and plant the seeds in pots or flats. A 3.5" pot can accommodate up to 16 seeds, so a standard flat with drainage could handle almost 300 seeds carrying the same density. Any size pot can be chosen, and they don't have to be deep.



Pictured are examples of what I do. In figure 1, you see the seed "pressed" into the moistened growing medium, still exposed, then in figure 2, you see granite grit (used on chicken farms) to fill to the rim. I make this choice, which works very well, because I don't have to create a mini-greenhouse when using the grit. It holds in the moisture without accumulating moisture, so does not have to be watered as often, it weighs down the seeds from "floating" to the surface after watering, and seedlings emerge very easily with easy visibility of leaf emergence after quick inspection. *As an aside, I recommend the same method for any ephemeral seeds, like Clivia, Crinum, and Habranthus/ Zephyranthes, all species which come to mind readily.*

If you don't have access to granite grit, you could use a layer of play sand, vermiculite, or simply plant shallowly (covered) in germination medium, but you have to be more careful when watering and you don't want the pots to be saturated all the time.

Alternatively, you can do as in figure 1 (whatever size pot you choose), then create a mini-greenhouse using a combination of flagging wire or hanger wire (make two hoops crossing each other from corner to corner), a baggie, and rubber band. The critical concern with this method would be that you keep the seeds out of direct sunlight due to excessive heat buildup in sunshine.



My belief is that during germination the seeds need to avoid freezing weather, so they are best suited to germinate near a sunny window of an unheated room, or in a cold frame, or in a winter house with supplemental heat to keep temperatures above freezing.

One nice thing about surface sowing, whether on the ground or in a pot, is that you can witness the emergence of the root, which lets you know as soon as possible that germination is successful. The first leaf may not emerge until late winter.

Keep the seedling growing for as long as possible before its first dormancy, then, in the summer, you can "harvest" the mini-bulbs and plant at the same level in the ground. Keep the pots semi-moist during that dormant period before harvest/transplant, since potting medium, left alone, can become bone dry. Remember that *Lycoris* bulbs like to keep their roots even when dormant, so be careful when transplanting next year to save as much of the root as possible. You can, of course, leave the seedlings in the pot for another season if you like, but fall foliage *Lycoris*, such as *L. radiata* var. *pumila*, will need to be kept above freezing during winter growth, and none of the *Lycoris* seedlings would survive a pot freezing through. You would at least need to plunge the pot, even if a hardy *Lycoris*.

Happy Seed Sowing!!!