

General Guidelines for Collecting Native Grass Seed

1. Seeds will ripen about 6 weeks after grass flowers. Native grass seedheads generally ripen from the top down, and seeds should be ready to harvest when seedhead tips begin to shatter.
2. A good time to harvest is when most of the seed is at the medium to hard dough stage. That means the seed will be fairly solid. Hard dough stage is defined as the point at which firm thumbnail pressure is needed to make an imprint on the “kernal” or caryopsis. Seeds can be extracted from their miscellaneous parts by rubbing them against the palm with your thumb.
3. If the seed shatters when you hit the seedhead firmly against your palm, it is ready to be collected.
4. Seed which shatters readily upon ripening should be checked frequently during the ripening period. It may be possible to secure lightweight mesh or cheesecloth bag over ripening seedheads to catch any ripe seed which falls.
5. For each collection site, a minimum of 1-cup (25 seedheads) is desired.
6. Collect seed in a paper bag; allow seed to dry in the open bag for at least 1 week prior to shipping to the Plant Materials Center.
7. **IMPORTANT:** Be sure to complete a data collection sheet (NRCS-ECS-580) for EACH collection site and attach it with the corresponding bag of seed.
8. Collections should be labeled with: “Attention Cool Season Grasses” on the envelope or package. Send all collection to:

USDA-NRCS Rose Lake Plant Materials Center
7472 Stoll Road
East Lansing, MI 48823-9420

