**Growing *Fritillaria* from Seed**

by Paul Cumbleton  
  
*Fritillaria* seed ripens in mid to late summer and is best sown as soon as ripe or soon after in autumn. While older seed may still be viable it develops germination inhibitors that can make late sowings germinate erratically. Fritillaria have evolved to have dispersal of their seed by the wind which results in their being adapted to germinating on the surface of the ground. So it is important to sow the seed on the surface of the compost and not bury it any deeper. But it should be covered by a layer of grit about half to one centimetre deep to help retain moisture. The compost should be gritty (and so free draining) and a simple mix of half grit and half of a loam-based  compost (such as John Innes seed compost) works well.  
  
Water the pots and place in a cool, sheltered place out of doors such as in a cold frame. Fritillaria seed requires a period of cold (but not freezing) to initiate germination, so the pots can be left outdoors through the winter until they germinate which is usually in the Spring. In mild winters it may be necessary to provide the cold period artificially by placing the pots in a refrigerator at about 4 centigrade. Check the seed regularly for any germination and remove immediately to a bright place to prevent etiolation of the seedlings in the dark.  
  
Once germinated keep the pots in a sunny position and keep watered throughout the growing season until the seedlings start to die down for their summer dormancy. While growing, they will benefit from a half-strength feed of a balanced fertiliser applied one a fortnight. By the end of the first year, the baby bulbs will be small and difficult to handle, so are better left to the end of their second year before any re-potting. Expect a "typical" *Fritillaria* to take 5 to 6 years to flower from sowing.  
  
More information about *Fritillaria* seeds can be found in Laurence Hill's excellent website [**here**](http://www.fritillariaicones.com/info/seeds.html).