Wild Rice Planting Instructions:

  Finished or processed wild rice is no longer viable as seed.

The ideal time to plant wild rice seed is in the fall as soon as you get your seed right after it is harvested. Spring planting is risky at best since the seed must go through an extended cold dormancy period in order to germinate. The seed must be kept free of mould before planting.

Wild rice must be in water for all of it’s growing season, generally April through August. Seeds will ripen late August and harvest (or natural re-seed) in early September depending on the conditions in your area. The ideal water depth is 45cm/l8in although it may thrive in water as shallow as l0 cm/4 in or as deep as l.5 m/5 ft+. Soil and water pH levels should be acidic, ideally between 3.5 and 6.8. Sowing at the rate of 65 kg/30 lbs per acre could yield a good first year crop. Do NOT ever use any form of fertilizer. Adding such elements to any water can be harmful.  The first year or two, do not harvest the Wild Rice seeds. Let them re-seed themselves to get a nice full crop. Wild rice is an annual plant and should be allowed to reseed itself for next year’s crop.  When harvesting make sure some of the seed is allowed to go back into the water.

You can broadcast the seed by hand along the shore or from a boat. The good seed should sink to the bottom immediately. What we recommend is that you try one or both of these proven methods: Soak the seed thoroughly in water overnight to make them heavy then broadcast the next day.  OR, Collect the soil/mud from the sides and water area that you are planting. Then mix the two together to form chunks or balls and throw them into the water so the seed goes right to the bottom. This method is nice if you need to get it to an area that is far from the shore and you can throw to it. It is ok to have some floating, these seeds will eventually naturally find a place to grow.

The seed should be under water when it germinates in the spring, usually once the water temperature climbs to 4 degrees C (40 degrees F). One month after germination, leaves will appear at the surface of the water. A constant water level during this FLOATING LEAF STAGE is important because the root system is still developing and these very buoyant plants may be uprooted by rapidly rising water. The wave action caused by severe winds may also damage the plants. During the month long floating leaf stage the stalk and roots enlarge. When this growth period is complete, aerial leaves are produced and the plant rapidly develops to the mature height of 1.8-2.7 m/6-9 ft. Ponds that dry up after mid-July may still be able to support wild rice if the water table remains close to the soil surface.  But a rapid drop in water level can cause the plants to fall over.  Livestock, black birds and muskrat can be pests. There is even a “wild rice worm” that will be happy to eat the seeds. Do NOT ever spay with pesticides or use any form of un-natural way to keep pests or other plants away.  Let nature do its own thing. Also troublesome are certain aquatic weeds: equisetum (horsetail rush/joint grass), sparganium (bur-reed), cattails and milfoil.  If the water level is high enough, these pesty plants will not survive.

 In the fall the seed will eventually lure wonderful birds, ducks and geese to the area.

 If you are planning to plant Wild Rice in a water pond or in a Bay on a body of water on any land that you do not own, please check with your local MNR to make sure that it will not harm that waterway in any way.  When planting on your own land, make sure that the water does not flow into an area that this plant can be harmful. Wild Rice can be VERY invasive so be ware the area you are planting. If it likes where it is planted, it WILL take over that water area.

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