

Agriculture Academy's

Growing Baobab Seeds



Agriculture Academy

How to Grow Baobab Trees from Seeds

Thank you for downloading this guide!

In this eBook, we are going to show you the steps that you can follow to grow your very own baobab trees from seeds!

Before we begin, lets recap some background info about the fantastic baobab tree.



Germinated baobab seed

The Baobab Tree

The baobab is an African native and is believed to be one of the largest succulents in the world. Capable of growing up to 25m tall, this tree is easily distinguishable thanks to its wide, squat trunk and extensive branch system which makes the tree look as though it's growing upside down. The baobab is also known as the cream of tartar or monkey bread tree in its native Africa. While the tree is a marvel to behold in its appearance alone, the fruit can also be used to treat ailments like fevers. The fruit can also be used to brew a drink with a similar taste to lemonade. The baobab can also act as a refuge for dehydrated natives as rainwater collects in the centre of the tree, acting like a natural reservoir. As a succulent, they thrive in hot climates and prefer sandy, well drained soils. The species we are going to grow in this video is called *Adansonia digitata*, but there are many different species distributed throughout southern Africa.

Now that we have covered some of the basics of the baobab tree, lets dive into the details of growing them from seed!

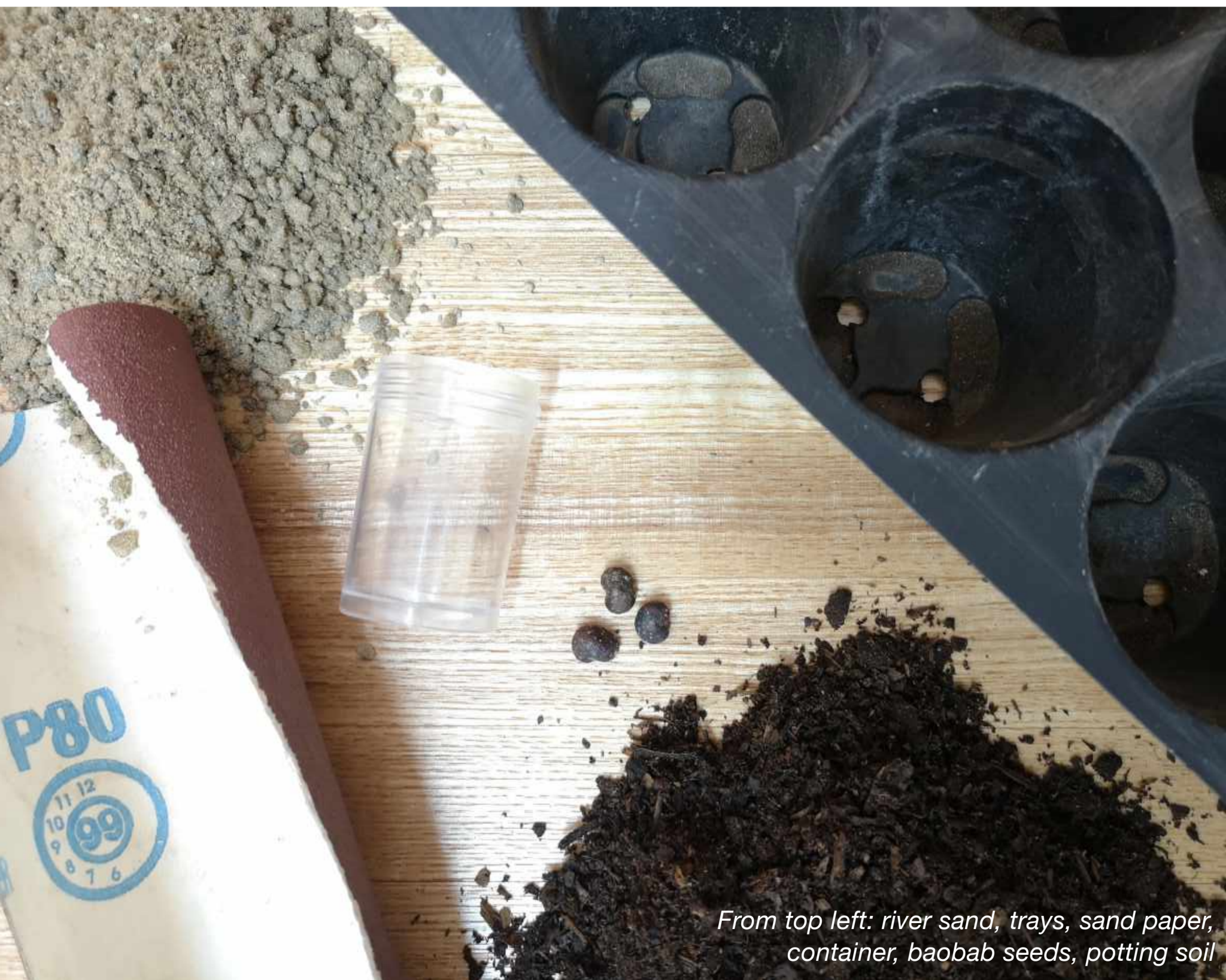


Gather your Equipment

To get started you will need:

- Baobab seed
- A few small containers

- Coarse sandpaper
- Potting soil
- River sand
- And Pots



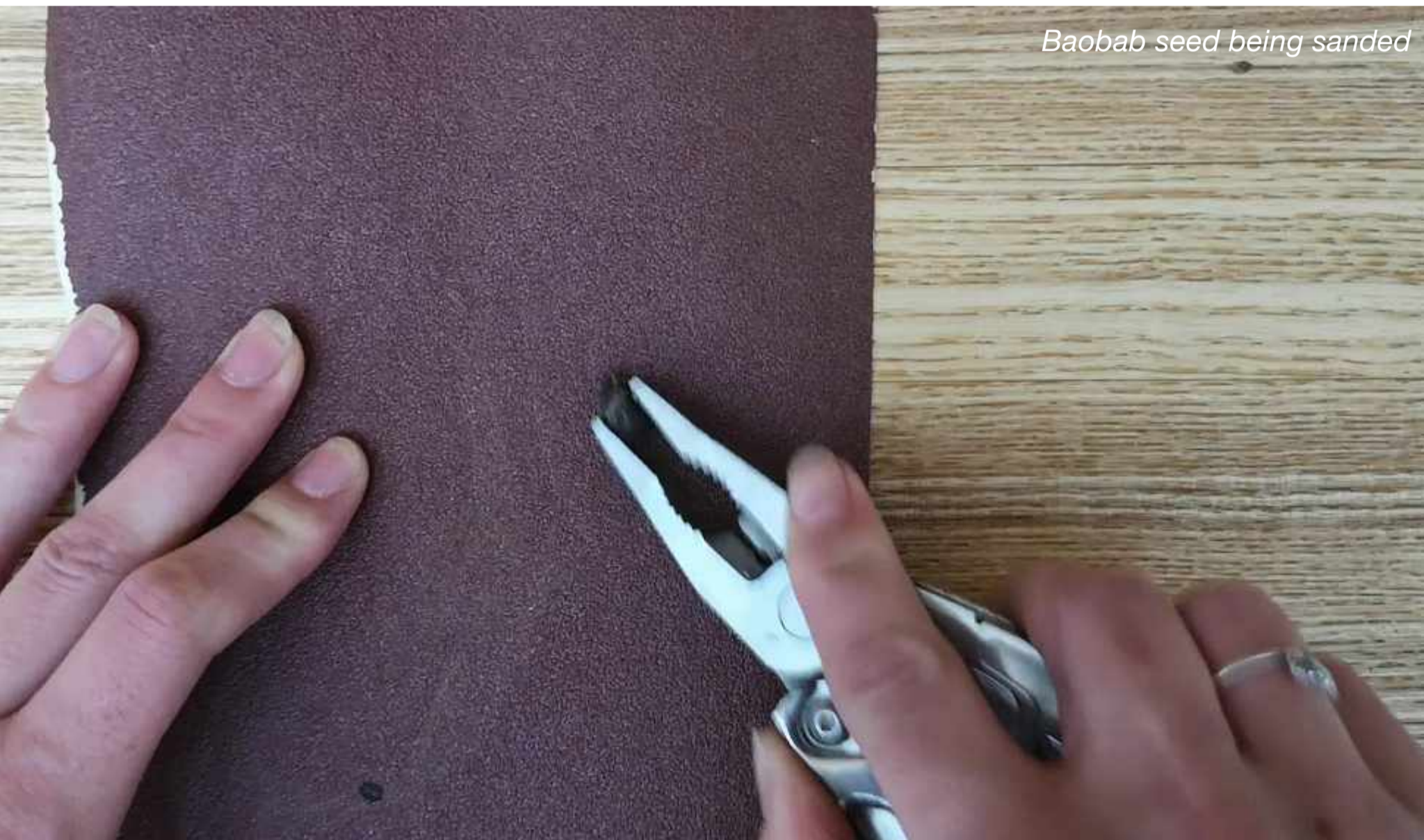
From top left: river sand, trays, sand paper, container, baobab seeds, potting soil

Treat your Seed

Baobab seed are notoriously slow and difficult to germinate. Therefore, we are going to treat the seed before we plant them.

Using your sandpaper, file your seed until you create an almost transparent layer. Try and file the entire surface and do not be gentle in this step. These seed coats are extremely hard and by removing the outer layers, you can help the seed to take up water, which is necessary if a seedling is going to emerge. You may want to use some pliers to get a firm grip on your seed and to protect your fingers from nicks.

Once you have filed your seed, place them in a container and pour boiling water over them. Leave them to soak for 24-48 hours. If you can, periodically refill the containers with hot water.



Baobab seed being sanded



Soaking seed

Mix your Soil

While your seed are soaking, you can mix your soil. We are using an all-purpose potting soil mixed with river sand. As we mentioned earlier, baobabs grow in the sandy African soils and do not tolerate waterlogging. The river sand helps to promote drainage and therefore helps to prevent root rot. Our mix is made up of 1-part potting soil to 1-part river sand. You can also use a commercial succulent or cacti mix too.

Fill your pots with the soil. The long taproot of baobab seedlings can be quite fragile and get damaged easily during transplantation. Therefore, we recommend using one medium sized pot per seed. This will provide enough area for roots to grow and establish before you need to transplant your seed.



Sowing your Seed

After the seed have soaked, the seed will have imbibed, or swollen up with water. You can see here the difference between a non-soaked seed, a seed that was sanded and soaked for 24 hours and a seed that has started to germinate. After soaking, the coats will have softened and maybe even started to peel off themselves. Try and remove this covering either with your fingernails or by giving your seed another filing with the sandpaper. Be careful in this step, some seeds may have started to germinate and any damage to the radicle, which will form the root, will kill your plants before they even get a chance to grow.

After you have treated your seed, sow them into 1 cm deep holes. Lightly cover them with soil. Give them a good soaking with a fine irrigation and keep them in a warm area. Make sure your soil is kept moist, but not waterlogged.



In a few weeks' time, your seed will start to emerge, although this may occur quicker in warmer environments. Your seedlings will still require regular watering. With every irrigation, soak the soil well and only water again once the top couple of centimetres have dried out. When your seedlings have grown 2 true leaves, you can transplant them into a larger container filled with a sandy mix.



Germinated seed in test tube



Baobab seedling

Top Tips for Growing Baobab Seeds

Tip 1: Treat your seed with a fungicide before you sow them. You can use a commercial product or a bleach solution. You may also want to sterilize your soil by pouring boiling water over the pots before you plant. This will also give you an indication of the drainage capacity of your soil. If you notice any pooling you need to amend your soil with more sand or other products like perlite. If you do treat your soil, make sure your pots can withstand the high temperatures.



Top Tips for Growing Baobab Seeds

Tip 2: Place some pebbles or gravel at the bottom of your containers. This will promote drainage even further and ensure that the roots of your seedlings do not sit in water. We are using a commercial hydroponic substrate, but any small rocks or gravel will do.



Tip 3: If you do not have a greenhouse or are worried about your soil drying out simply cover the tops of your pots with clingfilm. The seal does not need to be airtight for it to conserve moisture and heat. Just don't place your pots in direct sunlight if you do this, the clingfilm will act like a magnifying glass and overheat your seed. Also remember to remove any condensation build-up on the film daily.

