

Cleaning *Cercis* Seed with a Lawn Boy Mower

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Cercis canadensis (eastern redbud), being a member of the Leguminosae family, bears its seed in a true pod 2 inches to 3 inches long which ripens in October to November. It is our experience that if the pods are picked early while still pliable, they remain tough and do not easily split open to release the seeds even after drying indoors. If left on the tree longer, the pods start to open and the seeds can be lost even as they are being collected.

We have opted to collect the pods while they are still in the pliable stage and just starting to dry but are definitely not green. To remove the seeds from the pods, we use a Lawn Boy mower with a grass bag attachment. This has been very effective for either a small or large amount of seed. Some key points are as follows:

- Spread pods on a hard surface—preferably concrete.
- Spread pods in a low pile, slightly narrower than the mower.
- Adjust mower height to clear the pile of pods.
- Be sure mower bag is empty and clean of weed seeds.
- Mowing the pods once is usually sufficient to break them open and release the seeds.
- A cardboard barrier around the pile to be mowed helps to contain the seeds that blow out from the sides of the mower.
- Debris can be sifted out as usual to retrieve clean seed.
- The only drawback to this method is that some seeds are damaged, but the number of damaged seeds is not great enough to offset the efficiency of this procedure.