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Pelleting is the process of coating seeds with inert materials to make them uniform in size and shape. Whether direct seeded in the field or sown in flats for transplants, pelleted seed allows for greater accuracy and results in a more efficient seeding process. Seeds are pelleted by tumbling them with the coating material and gradually adding moisture. Once the pellet coating reaches the desired size, the pelleted seeds are cured (dried).

### **BENEFITS:**

Because of its uniform size and shape, pelleted seed is less likely to become jammed or stuck in mechanical planters, allowing growers to accurately singulate and efficiently plant direct-seeded crops. Accurate seeding and seed spacing makes thinning stands easier or even unnecessary, leading to less seed waste and lower labor costs.

Pellet coatings are often used as a vehicle for seed treatments such as Natural III. This helps to keep the treatment near the seed during the germination period. In addition, pellets make many small-seeded crops, such as lettuce, carrots, and some flowers, easier to handle in general, so even if you are not planting on a large scale, pellets can be useful.

### **CULTURE:**

Pelleted seed requires a little extra attention when it comes to watering, as it performs best with consistent, moderate soil moisture throughout the germination period. An initial watering will split or dissolve the pellet, but if the soil is allowed to dry out before the germination period is over, the seed may receive insufficient moisture for optimal germination. Water-logged conditions may also hinder germination, as fine mineral pellet materials can retain water close to the seed, depriving it of oxygen.

Pelleting offers many advantages, but this process also shortens the shelf life of the seed. We recommend using pelleted seed within one year of purchase. If you need to store pelleted seeds until planting, protect them from heat and humidity in a cool, dark, dry place. If you prefer to store your seed in the refrigerator, be sure to place the seed in an air-tight container to protect it from fluctuations in humidity.

Pellets come in a variety of densities and sizes. Pellet densities range from low to medium to high, with low-density pellets being the lightest and high-density pellets being the heaviest. Johnny's sells medium-density pellets, which are useful in a wide variety of growing conditions and planting equipment. Pellets are sized in units based on 1/64 of one inch. For example, a size 13.0 pellet has a diameter equal to  $13.0 \times \frac{1}{64}$ , which is approximately 0.2 inches. Pellet sizes also correspond to the belt sizes for Stanhay mechanical planting equipment. A size 13.0 pellet would require the Stanhay belt No. 13.

With some attention to detail, pelleted seed will greatly enhance the accuracy and efficiency of direct-seeded crops.