

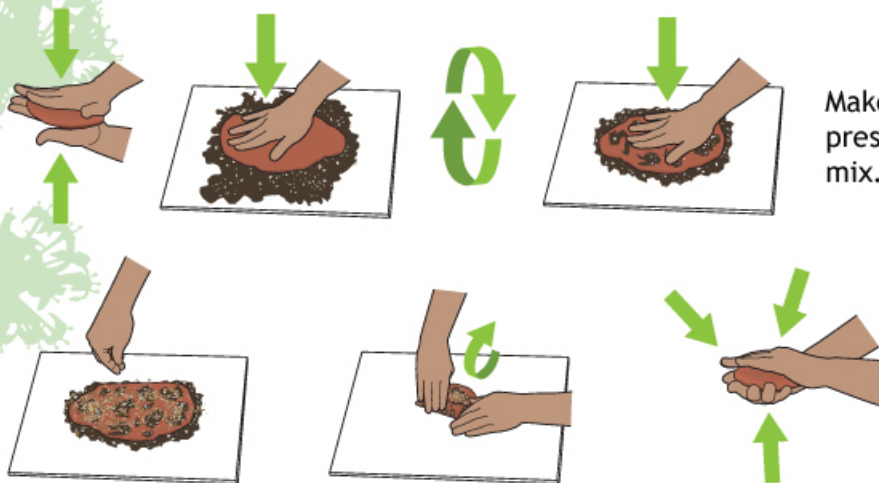
FIGHT THE BLIGHT

Fling Some Green

Seed balls are a great way to bring life to vacant land. The combination of seeds, clay, and potting mix is a simple delivery system that protects the seeds, holds on to water, and contains enough nutrients for sprouts to get started in poor soil. No tools or digging necessary! Seed balls are simply scattered on the ground to wait for the next rain.

Chicago neighborhoods have a surplus of vacant lots—land that can go unused for years. By adding plants, we can bring life to dead soil, beautify blighted areas, decrease water runoff, absorb carbon dioxide, reduce heat, create habitat, and clean up contaminants.

You need: clay, potting mix, and seeds. You can buy pottery clay at art supply stores or find the local variety about 18 inches underground (try a construction site). You can buy seeds in the bulk section of the health food store. Try millet, wheat berries, mustard seed, popcorn, whole peas, lentils, beans, raw sunflower seeds, or birdseed mix.



Make a pancake from a handful of clay, and press into a scattered handful of potting mix. Flip over and press again.

Sprinkle seeds over the pancake. Use at least three types of seeds, about a teaspoon of each. Using a few different species improves the chances of success in a variety of conditions. Roll up the pancake and knead it a little. Add a little water if it's crumbly. Form into small balls about an inch in diameter. They can be used right away or put them somewhere dark and airy to dry.

Toss seed balls onto vacant land. They work best where there isn't much ground cover. Use about one ball per square foot. Tennis rackets and slingshots can extend your range. Wait for rain.

