

adjustable environmental controls would help our seedling crops come up faster and with more uniform germination than the more temporary enclosures we had been using previously. A chamber would also permit larger production windows and scheduling opportunities.

Instead of building a permanent structure we decided to purchase an insulated shipping container and modify it to suit our needs. We found a company close to the Port of Portland that refurbishes used containers and sells them at reasonable prices. The company delivered a 24-inch insulated container that was missing its refrigeration unit. After calculating the minimal light requirements of some of our seed crops we had a local electrical company install water-resistant fluorescent light fixtures. Our own technical services department built a new insulated wall and door where the old refrigeration unit used to be. Next, they installed a combination heating/air conditioning window unit with a small fan and circulation tube that ran along the floor of the container. Finally, we installed the wire-rack shelves and were ready to start sowing.

Seed Leaching Notes

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Some seed contain chemical germination inhibitors that require leaching before germination can proceed. One of the groups that we have found benefit from a leaching treatment before sowing are the *Mahonia* taxa. In the past, we had simply placed the seed in a mesh bag and slowly run water from a hose through the seed. Success was somewhat inconsistent using this method. To more uniformly leach all of the seed, we created a new leaching system using material we had around the nursery.

We store many of our seed in clear, 128-oz, plastic containers with screw lids. These would serve as our new leaching environments. We cut out the top of each lid and replaced it with a fine mesh, stainless steel screen. A small hole was made at one of the top corners of each of the containers, just large enough to permit the insertion of 1/4-inch spaghetti tubing. The spaghetti tubing was attached to a pipe manifold with ball valves to control the water flow rate through each tube. The manifold has five ball valves on it, allowing us to leach up to five different seed lots at the same time. When the water is turned on, it travels through the tubing down to the bottom of the containers, mixing the seed as it leaches them, ensuring a more even treatment.

Dividing Tool

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At the Dayton, Oregon location of Monrovia Growers we make over 300,000 divisions of grasses, astilbes, and irises each year. One tool that we've found invaluable for this task is the Dexter Limelight Knife that has a 6-inch stainless steel blade. It is ergonomically designed and the bright colored handle makes it hard to lose. Our knives