

I reached out to our Facebook group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/525266728469540>, for information about checking seed viability for black walnuts. Here's what two experts in the field, Ray Major and Bill Deeter said,

Ray:

The most certain way to assess viability is by performing a sample sacrificial cut test.

Select a 100 sound looking nuts from the tree to be collected. Crack them open and count the number of nuts that have sound nutmeats. This number is an estimate of the total germination percentage of the nuts from the tree in question. This may be done using a smaller number of seed. However for large trees that produce many hundreds of seed, a larger sample size has greater statistical significance. Some trees will produce far higher percentages of sound seed than others.

Float testing can be done. It is not as reliable with walnuts as it is with acorns. And in very dry Aulumns, float testing can yield lower viability estimates than sample cut testing. For float testing, soak the nuts in water for 24 hours. Those that sink have a higher viability rate than those that float. Plant the sinkers for best results.

Bill:

Trees from seed has very good recommendations and observations on this subject.

I will add from my experience with Mast trees.

I like to wait to pick or collect the last seed drops or directly from the tree the last hanging fruit as I notice it's state of maturity.

Seed fill for me is very important and last hanging fruit has a higher % of good fill (not 100%, but nothing is).

The drawback is that waiting a few extra days or even a couple weeks exposes the fruit to wildlife collection as well.

But, I am not looking for huge commercial hauls (except after a windstorm when tons of acorns or butternuts fall) for our State nursery.

Early drops are rife with issues and to me, not a consistent avenue of good seed and unless it's a uncommon tree or just seems to mature early I won't entertain a lot of collecting of it.