

## Seed saving for beginners

- Save seeds from heirloom and open-pollinated varieties. Hybrid (F1) varieties do not stay true to parent plant.
  - The easiest seeds to save are self-pollinating (pollinating within the same plant) annual vegetables and flowers. These are most likely to reproduce true to the parent plant.
  - Plan seeding and transplanting early enough in the season to allow for full maturity of varieties.
  - When choosing plants to save seed from, depending on your preference, look for the most vigorous, earliest producing, with the largest fruits, or best flavor.
  - At every step of the seed saving process, label the seeds so that there is no question as to what they are.
  - After the process of collecting and cleaning the seeds, store the seeds in labelled paper bags, envelopes, recycled seed packets, film containers, or glass jars (for larger seeds like beans). Store these containers in a cool, dry, dark place.
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### RESOURCES

- Seed Savers Exchange - [www.seedsavers.org](http://www.seedsavers.org)
- Nature & Nurture Seeds - [www.natureandnurture.com](http://www.natureandnurture.com)
- The Complete Idiot's Guide to Seed saving and Starting - Sheri Ann Richardson
- Saving Our Seeds: The Practice and philosophy - Bevin Cohen
- Saving Seeds: the gardener's guide to growing and storing - Marc Rogers
- The Seed Garden - Lee Buttala & Shanyn Siegel
- Breed Your Own Vegetable Varieties - Carol Deppe



## HERBS

Herbs stay true to type.

- Plant one extra plant of each herb that you would like to save.
- Allow designated plant to flower (bolt) and process.

## PEPPERS

Peppers are self-pollinating.



- Allow designated lettuce heads to fully mature and flower (bolt).
- Allow flower head to begin to dry, about half the flowers have a feathery seed head.
- Remove entire flower head before fully dry and place in labelled paper bag to fully dry (1 - 2 weeks).
- When completely dry, separate seeds from flower stalk by shaking the bag or by hand-store.
- Seed viability 1 - 4 years.

## EGGPLANT

While eggplant is self-pollinating, flowers are bigger and showy thus more susceptible to cross pollination by insects. Leave 50 feet between varieties.



- Allow eggplants to mature fully, becoming dull, yellow or brown and somewhat wrinkled. The fruit will be past the eating stage.
- Slice open the eggplant and scoop out the seeds.
- Separate the seeds from the flesh by adding water to the bowl and working the pulp with your fingers.
- Seeds will sink to the bottom of the bowl, pour off the floating pulp. Several washings may be necessary to get clean seeds.
- Collect seeds and dry them on plate for a week and store.
- Seed viability 3 - 5 years.

## CUCUMBERS

Cucumbers are not self-pollinating and will cross-pollinate between varieties. If saving seed, grow only one variety.



- Allow fruits to fully ripen, at least 5 weeks after the eating stage. Cucumber will have a golden color.
- Process by fermenting. Follow fermentation instructions under tomatoes.
- Seed viability 5 - 7 years.



## FLOWERS

- Cut off dried flower heads.
- Place flower heads in paper bag to fully dry.
- Separate the seeds from the dried petals and other flower parts by shaking the bag or by hand.
- Store in labelled packets.



## TOMATOES

Tomatoes are self-pollinating. There are several ways to save tomato seeds, such as drying, fermenting and freezing slices. Drying and freezing are easiest, and fermentation removes the gelatinous outer layer of the seed that prevents germination. If a tomato is ripe enough to eat it is fully ripe and acceptable for seed saving. After the pulp has been removed, the rest of the tomato can be eaten.

### Drying:

- From the fully ripe fruit, remove the seeds with as little surrounding gel as possible.
- Smear the seeds on a paper towel or a paper coffee filter and label.
- Allow the paper to dry and store, as is, in an envelope or Ziploc bag.
- In the spring, the seed-embedded paper may be cut and planted.
- Seed viability 3 - 5 years.

### Freezing slices:

- Rinse off fully ripe tomatoes under cold running water and dry.
- With a sharp knife, cut ½ inch slices of tomato.
- Freeze individual slices on parchment paper for 24 hours. After 24 hours, wrap frozen, individual slices in plastic wrap and store in Ziploc bag in freezer.
- In spring, when ready to plant, place frozen tomato disc in 2-inch-deep hole and lightly cover with planting mix, pressing down firmly. Space tomato discs 4 inches apart. When seedlings emerge, thin as needed.
- Seed viability 1 year.

### Fermentation:

- From fully ripe fruit, remove the seeds and surrounding gel.
- Place seeds and gel in glass jar with water (about half the amount of mixture already in jar).
- Allow the mixture to ferment, swirl the contents daily for 1 - 5 days.
- During fermentation, a layer of mold will form on top and viable seeds will sink to the bottom.
- After fermentation, skim off the mold layer and add water. Let seeds settle on the bottom of the jar and pour off the pulpy water. This may have to be repeated several times until the water is clear and seeds clean. Pour seeds into strainer to dry for 2 weeks and store.
- Seed viability 4 - 10 years.



## BEANS & PEAS

Most beans and peas are self-pollinating. If growing for seed, they do not need much space between varieties.

- Designate some plants to grow to full maturity (seed saving). Do not pick these plants for food.
- Allow pods to fully mature and seeds to develop. Pods will turn brown and leathery (mostly dry but not open).
- After picking, allow the pods to dry fully (about two weeks), gently open and remove the seeds.
- Air dry seed for two weeks and store.
- Seed viability 3 - 6 years.



## LETTUCE

Lettuce seeds stay true to type. May grow more than one variety.

- Allow designated lettuce heads to fully mature and flower (bolt), similar to herbs.
- Allow flower head to begin to dry, about half the flowers have a feathery seed head.
- Remove entire flower head before fully dry and place in labelled paper bag to fully dry (1 - 2 weeks).
- When completely dry, separate seeds from flower stalk by shaking the bag or by hand-store.
- Seed viability 1 - 4 years.