

SAVING SEEDS FOR MORE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

How To Save Seeds

Stewardship Pemberton Society

Prepared by Mojca Gomol

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Saving seeds plays a vital role in maintaining biodiversity, promoting sustainable agriculture, and fostering self-sufficiency in food production. It empowers individuals and communities to have greater control over their food systems while preserving traditional knowledge and protecting the environment.



GENERAL GUIDE ON SEED SAVING

Saving seeds is an essential practice for preserving plant biodiversity and maintaining a sustainable food system. By following these steps, you can save and store seeds for future planting seasons, thereby preserving plant varieties and fostering self-sufficiency in gardening and food production.

1. **Choose open-pollinated or heirloom varieties:** Open-pollinated seeds produce plants that closely resemble the parent plant, ensuring genetic consistency. Heirloom varieties are open-pollinated and have been passed down for generations, often cherished for their unique traits.
2. **Select healthy plants:** Choose the healthiest, most vigorous plants with desirable traits like flavor, size, or disease resistance. Avoid collecting seeds from weak or diseased plants.
3. **Allow seeds to fully mature:** Allow the plant to complete its life cycle and let the seeds mature fully on the plant. Seeds should usually be left on the plant until they are fully ripe and have turned their characteristic color. For vegetables, this typically means letting them stay on the plant until they are overripe for eating.
4. **Harvest the seeds:** Once the seeds are mature, harvest them. For dry-seeded plants like beans or peppers, allow the seeds to dry on the plant. For wet-seeded plants like tomatoes or cucumbers, scoop out the seeds and place them in a container with some pulp and liquid to ferment.
5. **Clean and dry the seeds:** Separate the seeds from any plant debris or pulp. For dry-seeded plants, this can be done by hand or by gently threshing the plants. For wet-seeded plants, after fermenting, add water to the container, stir, and allow the viable seeds to sink to the bottom. Discard any floating or unviable seeds. Rinse the seeds thoroughly and then dry them on a paper towel or a fine mesh screen in a well-ventilated area away from direct sunlight.
6. **Store the seeds:** Once the seeds are completely dry, store them in airtight containers such as glass jars or envelopes. To track age and variety, label the containers with the plant variety and the date of collection. Store the containers in a cool, dry, and dark place to maintain seed viability.
7. **Maintain seed viability:** To ensure the longevity of the saved seeds, it is important to protect them from moisture, extreme temperatures, and pests. Periodically check the stored seeds for any signs of damage or decay. If necessary, replace them with fresh seeds.

EASY TO SAVE SEEDS



Beans:

- Allow the bean pods to fully mature and dry on the plants.
- Once the pods are dry and brittle, remove them from the plants.
- Open the pods and collect the seeds.
- Place the seeds in a cool, dry location for further drying.
- Store the seeds in an airtight container.

Peas:

- Leave the pea pods on the plants until they have fully matured and turned brown.
- Harvest the pods and allow them to dry further in a well-ventilated area.
- Once the pods are dry, open them and remove the peas.
- Place the peas in a cool, dry location to complete the drying process.
- Store the seeds in a sealed container.

Tomatoes:

- Select fully ripe tomatoes for seed saving.
- Cut the tomatoes and scoop out the seeds along with the gelatinous pulp.

- Place the seeds and pulp in a jar and add a little water.
- Allow the mixture to ferment for a few days (3-5 days), stirring it daily.
- After fermentation, rinse the seeds thoroughly under water to remove the pulp.
- Spread the seeds on a paper towel or a screen to dry completely.
- Once dry, store the tomato seeds in a cool, dry place.

Lettuce:

- Let a few lettuce plants bolt and develop seed stalks with small yellow flowers.
- Allow the flowers to mature and dry on the plant until they turn brown and fluffy.
- Collect the seed heads and place them in a bag or container.
- Rub the seed heads between your hands to release the seeds from the chaff.
- Remove any remaining chaff by gently blowing or sieving the seeds.
- Store the lettuce seeds in a cool, dry place.

Radishes:

- Allow a few radishes to remain in the ground until they have fully matured.
- The radish plants will develop seed pods that turn brown and dry.
- Harvest the seed pods and allow them to dry further in a well-ventilated area.
- Once dry, break open the pods and collect the seeds.
- Store the radish seeds in a cool, dry location.

Cilantro/Coriander:

- Allow a few cilantro plants to produce seed heads.
- Let the seed heads dry on the plants until they turn brown and start to split.
- Harvest the seed heads and gently crush them to release the coriander seeds.
- Remove any remaining debris or chaff.
- Store the coriander seeds in a cool, dry place.

MEDIUM-HARD SEEDS TO SAVE



Squash and Pumpkin:

- Allow the squash or pumpkin to fully mature on the vine until the skin hardens and the fruit reaches its full color.
- Cut open the squash or pumpkin and scoop out the seeds and surrounding pulp into a container.
- Add water to the container, filling it about halfway. The water helps separate the seeds from the pulp.
- Allow the seeds to ferment for a few days, stirring the mixture daily. This fermentation process helps remove the pulp.
- After fermentation, the viable seeds will sink to the bottom, while the pulp and non-viable seeds will float.
- Carefully pour off the floating debris, being careful not to pour out any viable seeds.
- Rinse the seeds thoroughly under running water to remove any remaining pulp.
- Spread the seeds on a paper towel or a fine mesh screen in a well-ventilated area away from direct sunlight to dry completely.
- Once dry, store the seeds in an airtight container in a cool, dry place.

Cucumbers:

- Allow the cucumbers to fully ripen on the vine until they turn yellow or start to soften.
- Cut open the cucumbers and scoop out the seeds along with the gel-like substance into a container.
- Add water to the container and stir the mixture. The water will help separate the seeds from the gel.
- Allow the mixture to sit for a few days, stirring occasionally. This fermentation process helps remove the gel coating from the seeds.
- After fermentation, the viable seeds will sink to the bottom, while the gel and non-viable seeds will float.
- Carefully pour off the floating debris, being careful not to pour out any viable seeds.
- Rinse the seeds thoroughly under running water to remove any remaining gel.
- Dry the seeds by spreading them on a paper towel or a fine mesh screen in a well-ventilated area away from direct sunlight.
- Once dry, store the seeds in an airtight container in a cool, dry place.

Eggplants:

- Allow the eggplants to fully ripen on the plant until the skin becomes dull and slightly wrinkled.
- Cut open the eggplant and scoop out the seeds into a container.
- Add water to the container and gently rub the seeds to remove the surrounding pulp.
- Rinse the seeds thoroughly under running water to remove any remaining pulp.
- Spread the seeds on a paper towel or a fine mesh screen to dry completely.
- Once dry, store the seeds in an airtight container in a cool, dry place.

Papayas:

- Allow the papaya fruit to fully ripen on the plant until it reaches its desired ripeness.
- Cut open the papaya and scoop out the seeds into a container.
- Add water to the container and allow the seeds to ferment for a few days, stirring occasionally.
- After fermentation, rinse the seeds thoroughly under running water

to remove any remaining gelatinous coating.

- Spread the seeds on a paper towel or a fine mesh screen to dry completely.
- Once dry, store the seeds in an airtight container in a cool, dry place.

Sunflower:

- Allow the sunflower heads to fully mature on the plant until the back of the head turns brown and the seeds appear plump and firm.
- Cut off the sunflower head using clean pruning shears or a sharp knife.
- Gently rub the head between your hands to dislodge the seeds. Alternatively, you can use a fork or a brush to loosen the seeds.
- Separate the seeds from the remaining plant debris, chaff, and petals.
- Spread the seeds on a paper towel or a fine mesh screen to dry completely.
- Once dry, store the seeds in an airtight container in a cool, dry place.

HARD TO SAVE SEED



Carrots:

- Allow some carrot plants to overwinter in the ground, as they will produce seed heads the following year.
- Let the seed heads dry and turn brown on the plant.
- Cut off the seed heads and place them in a paper bag to continue drying in a well-ventilated area.
- Shake the seed heads gently to release the seeds.
- Separate the seeds from any remaining plant debris.
- Place the seeds in a cool, dry place for further drying and curing.
- Store the dried carrot seeds in a labeled, airtight container in a cool, dry location.

Onions:

- Allow some onion plants to bolt and produce flower stalks.
- Wait for the seed heads to dry and turn brown on the plant.
- Cut off the seed heads and place them in a well-ventilated area to continue drying.
- Once fully dry, rub or crush the seed heads to release the seeds.
- Separate the seeds from the chaff by winnowing or using a fine-mesh sieve.

- Clean the seeds further by removing any remaining debris.
- Store the onion seeds in a labeled, airtight container in a cool, dry location.

Celery:

- Allow some celery plants to bolt and produce seed heads.
- Harvest the seed heads when they turn brown and dry.
- Place the seed heads in a paper bag and shake it vigorously to release the seeds.
- Clean the seeds by removing debris and chaff.
- Place the seeds in a well-ventilated area to ensure complete drying.
- Store the celery seeds in a labeled, airtight container in a cool, dry location.

Parsley:

- Let some parsley plants bolt and produce seed heads.
- Wait for the seed heads to turn brown and dry on the plant.
- Harvest the seed heads and place them in a paper bag.
- Shake the bag gently to release the seeds from the seed heads.
- Clean the seeds by removing any debris or chaff.
- Allow the seeds to further dry in a well-ventilated area.
- Store the parsley seeds in a labeled, airtight container in a cool, dry location.