

Cleaning dry seeds

After you harvest seeds, they should be separated from the fruit, seed heads, and other plant parts before storage. Most seeds are dry and brown when you harvest them. These include bean and pea pods, herbs and ornamental flowers. Harvest pods or seed heads when they have fully matured and dried out.

Cleaning wet seeds with no pulp

Some seeds are found inside moist fruits, such as peppers and melons.

- Harvest fruit when fully ripe on the plant.
- Store long-keeping fruit such as squash for at least 3 weeks to allow the seeds to mature further. Skip this step for short-keeping melons and peppers.
- Cut the fruit and scoop out the seeds; eat the rest.
- Rinse the seeds and place them on a plate to dry (they will stick to paper)

Cleaning wet seeds surrounded by pulp

Some seeds are surrounded with a jelly-like pulp, such as tomatoes and cukes.

- Harvest fruit when they're fully ripe on the plant.
- Cut each fruit in half, and squeeze seeds and pulp into a jar.
- Let sit for 3-4 days at room temperature. When the pulp is fully rotten, add water. Seeds will sink, mouldy pulp will rise. Pour off the pulp, strain and dry.

Drying and storing seeds

- Winnow small seeds to remove chaff by pouring from one container to another in a light breeze.
- Spread seeds on a screen or plate to dry. Never dry seeds in an oven or in the sun – they will die at temperatures above 40C.
- Package small seeds in paper envelopes and store in glass jars to keep out moisture. Plastic bags do not seal out moisture; use glass jars or hard plastic containers with tight lids for your paper or plastic-bagged seeds.
- Remember to label all your seed packages!

Seeds of some plant varieties last for many years, but others only remain viable for a year or two. Try to plant out your saved seeds the following year to have healthy, vigorous plants.

It's a good idea to test-germinate your seeds for viability in the spring by placing 10 seeds inside a folded moistened paper towel tucked inside an open plastic bag to keep moist. The seeds will germinate in 2 to 14 days. If, for example, 8 of 10 seeds germinate, you will have 80% germination rate, and can plant sufficient seeds with that in mind.

All information is from
Seeds of Diversity Canada.
To learn more about their
programmes, visit
seeds.ca



A Quick Guide to Saving your own Garden Seeds

Being able to collect seeds is one of the most fulfilling aspects of gardening. Seed saving can elevate your gardening experience to a sustainable level while promoting diversity and security in our food system.

A century ago, millions of seed-saving gardeners and farmers kept our plant varieties alive by saving the seeds of their favorite plants. This has been a normal part of traditional agricultural practice for 10,000 years. In 1900, our food was provided by as many as 1,500 different plants, plus thousands of different varieties. Today over 90% of the world's food is provided by only 30 different plants. Growers have become dependent on large seed companies, which for many years have been paring down the variety of plant seed available and promoting development of hybrid stock.



On the local level, we can help reverse this decline in diversity by selecting and sharing seed from vegetable varieties that perform well in our growing conditions. Saving seed produced from our own food plants, and teaching these skills to our children is a vital practice in our changing world.

In recent years the global food system has focused on an ever-narrowing selection of food varieties. Rare varieties contain some of the most important traits for superior nutritional value, taste, beauty, and potential disease resistance. With constant changes in our climate, and rising food prices worldwide, sustainable crop diversity offers the best hope to adapt the food system to the challenges facing us now. It is crucial to conserve all of the varieties that we can.

Heritage plant varieties belong to all people, and they stand as one of the greatest inheritances of humankind. When you save and share an endangered heritage variety, you help pass a 10,000 year legacy to the next generation.

ESSENTIAL READING FOR SEED-SAVERS

- **How to Save your own Seeds.** Seeds of Diversity Canada. Order online from www.seeds.ca. 68 pages. \$20.00 includes postage
- **Seed Saving Tips** and Crop-by-Crop Growing Guide: <https://www.seedsavers.org/learn>
- **A Seed Saving Guide for Gardeners and Farmers.** Free 30-page download from Organic Seed Alliance: <https://seedalliance.org/publications/seed-saving-guide-gardeners-farmers/>