

# Seed Saving Tips

Grow your favorite plants again, save money, trade seed and preserve plant diversity.

<b>Beans</b>	Let the pods age on the vine until they turn brown. You can also store the entire plant (with roots) upside down in a warm area until pods dry out. Cross-pollination could affect the purity of your bean seeds in the future. Pole beans are more likely to cross.
<b>Cantaloupe</b>	Best time to collect seed is when the stem dies and the fruit separates easily. Remove the membranes from the seed by rinsing and gently rubbing with your fingers.
<b>Cucumber</b>	Harvest seed when cucumbers are fully ripe and yellowed (too ripe for eating).
<b>Lettuce</b>	Let seed pods dry on the plant. Bag the plant to capture the seeds because they progressively fall off from bottom to top. Do not save seed from plants that bolt too soon. The seed you save may produce plants that go to seed prematurely.
<b>Peas</b>	Wait until the plant dies and collect the seeds. Peas do not cross-pollinate.
<b>Peppers</b>	Best time to collect seed is when peppers are full color and beginning to shrivel. Brush off the seeds from the inside stem and let dry. Peppers of the same species could cross. Grow one hot type and one sweet type to prevent cross-pollination.
<b>Pumpkin</b>	Remove seeds three weeks after harvesting the pumpkin. Varieties within the same species can cross. Rinse off membranes and dry well.
<b>Squash (Summer)</b>	Harvest seed when the squash has a hard skin and is too ripe to eat. Hold the seeds under water and rinse off the membrane. Avoid cross-pollination-do not plant these species together: Cucurbita Pepo, Cucurbita Moschata, Cucurbita Maxima and Cucurbita Mixta.
<b>Sunflower</b>	Most sunflowers are hybrids. Save heirloom seeds if you want the flower to stay true. Hang flower heads upside down by a short length of stalk in a cool, dry spot. Once dry, remove the seeds and keep dry until planting.
<b>Tomato</b>	Save seed when fruit is full color and firm, but still tender to the touch. Remove the protective gel covering the seed. Cross-pollination may occur with wild or currant tomatoes but most popular types will not cross. Ensure space between plants.
<b>Watermelon</b>	Remove fibers and membranes by rinsing. When dropped in a glass of water, viable seeds will sink to the bottom. Seeds that float may not germinate well.

The table to the left lists several popular annual vegetables and fruits with easy-to-save seeds and a lower potential for cross-pollination in the home garden. They flower and mature seed in the same year. General advice is given to maintain as much seed purity as possible when plants are more prone to cross.

Please seek out other references to enhance your knowledge of seed saving.

## Seed Saving Basics

- ~Save seeds from **heirloom** or **open pollinated (OP)** plants only if you want them to stay true. Hybrid seed will not produce the same plant again.
- ~Choose the healthiest plants and the largest seeds.
- ~Air dry seeds on a fine screen or paper away from direct sunlight and as quickly as possible to reduce contamination.
- ~Label seed (drying and storage).
- ~Use containers that limit moisture.
- ~Drying may not be necessary if planting soon after collection.