

Step-By-Step Guides on How To Save Your Seeds

You watched your plants grow, now its time to share the wealth and return the seeds to the collection!

Challenging Seed Types

Lettuce:

1. Once your lettuce plants have sent up their flower stalks, the seeds will begin to ripen.
2. Once the stalks are dryish and are producing dandelion-like fluff, you know the seeds have ripened to maturity.
3. To collect the seeds, shake the stalk over a paper bag or bucket. (This may be done over a couple days or all at once depending on how ready the seeds are.
4. Gently remove fluff from seeds.
5. Put seeds into an envelope, then date and label it.
6. Drop the seeds off to the staff at the Library to share with your community next year!

Cucumbers:

1. To save seeds from cucumber you must let them ripen on the vine past eating stage. This means they must turn yellow, enlarge, and the vine they are growing on must die.
2. Pick the overripe cucumber(s) from the dead vine and place in a dry place and allow to soften.
3. Slice cucumber lengthwise, and scoop seeds out into a large bowl or jar.
4. Add a few cups of water so that the seeds are floating in the liquid and pulp.
5. Cover and allow to ferment for 5 days.
6. Fermentation is complete when there is a layer of scum floating on the surface of the pulp and seeds and/or when the seeds have sunk to the bottom of the container in watery liquid with scum/pulp floating on the top. (Once this occurs, DO NOT leave the seeds to sit in liquid as they will begin to germinate).
7. Skim/remove scum and thick pulp from the top of the liquid and pour the remainder into a fine sieve.
8. Carefully tap and spread seeds out onto a paper or glass plate, not on paper towels as the seeds will stick.
9. Gently shake every once in a while to prevent clumping.
10. Set in a warm dry spot and allow seeds to fully dry (3 weeks! Or until seeds snap in half when bent) before putting into an envelope.
11. Drop the seeds off to the staff at the Library to share with your community next year!

Tomatoes:

1. Slice fully ripened tomatoes in half and scoop pulp and seeds into a clean bowl or jar.
2. Add a cup or so of water so that the seeds are floating in the liquid and pulp.
3. Cover and place in a warm, out-of-the-way spot to ferment for 2-4 days (It will begin to smell after a while so make sure it isn't in a high-traffic area).
4. Fermentation is complete when there is a layer of scum floating on the surface of the pulp and seeds and/or when the seeds have sunk to the bottom of the container in watery liquid with scum/pulp floating on the top. (Once this occurs, DO NOT leave the seeds to sit in liquid as they will begin to germinate).
5. Skim/remove scum and thick pulp from the top of the liquid and pour the remainder into a fine sieve.
6. Rinse seeds under running water, removing any pulp bits as you go.
7. Carefully tap and spread seeds out onto a paper or glass plate, not on paper towels as the seeds will stick.
8. Gently shake every once in a while to prevent clumping.
9. Set in a warm dry spot and allow seeds to fully dry before putting into an envelope.
10. Drop the seeds off to the staff at the Library to share with your community next year!

Carrots:

***WARNING: Carrots must grow for two seasons before you can harvest their seeds.**

1. Grow your carrots over the summer. Leave the largest, most healthy seeming carrots in the ground over winter.
2. Prune the tops of the carrots (the green plants) of dead leaves and flowers in the spring.
3. Let the carrot plants grow their flowers throughout the summer until the seeds begin to mature.
4. You will know when the seeds are mature when they turn brown and detach from the flowers.
5. They will fall but most will adhere to the green part of the plant.
6. Cut the stalks when about 80% of the seeds are mature, and place upside in paper bags to dry out completely. (Takes one or two days).
7. Shake the seeds off the stalks into the bag. Transfer the seeds into an envelope, then date and label.
8. Drop the seeds off to the staff at the Library to share with your community next year!



How To Return Your Seeds to the Seed Library

1. Follow the Step-By-Step Guide(s) on how to save the seeds from the vegetables you have grown this year.
2. Place seeds from each vegetable in its own (please do not mix vegetables and varieties) container and label it with the type of vegetable, variety (if you know it), and date.
3. Drop your seeds off to the staff at the Library, and your seeds will be added or reintegrated into the collection for sharing in the community next year!

Other Info You Need To Know About Seed Saving:

1. Harvest your seeds when the plant has “gone to seed”.
 - a. That term was coined for a reason! Most seeds are best harvested when the vegetables have passed the best time for eating.
 - b. If the vegetable looks good enough to eat, it’s usually not good enough for harvesting seeds yet.
2. Some vegetable plants are easier to harvest seeds from than others.
 - a. The process of harvesting seeds to use next year can be very easy or it can be tedious, time-consuming and difficult.
 - b. Make sure you read the package to determine whether you are taking home an “EASY” or “CHALLENGING” seed variety.
3. Only harvest seeds from healthy, good-looking vegetables.
 - a. This ensures that the seeds you harvest, and therefore the plants you grow next year, will be more likely to produce good results.