

Simple Seed Saving



Plants come from seeds, seeds come from plants. Over the years ordinary people without education saved seeds from their favourite plants and came up with the vegetable varieties we have today. Plants grown in our area gradually adapt over generations to become plants that actually like it here rather than wherever in the world the seeds are currently grown for sale. They may not be identical or named varieties that crop all at the same time, but they may actually grow better!

You can save seed too! By saving your own seed you will have plenty of fresh seed to grow in future, or swap for other seeds. By saving seeds you save money as you don't have to buy new seeds!



Plants to save seed from

F1 hybrids:

These are a careful cross between two selected uniform parents that give particular characteristics in their offspring. Seeds saved from these will not be true to their parents, but may be perfectly good plants in their own right. Beware that some strains carry male sterility, so limiting the crosses that can be made.

Open pollinated:

These will usually be a named variety that has been selected somewhere in the world by someone who thought it was a particularly good one. Seeds saved from these plants will grow true to the parents unless crossed by another variety or close relative.

Heritage varieties:

These are the same as Open pollinated except they have been continuously grown for a number of decades – sometimes centuries.

All these above seeds will have limited genetic variation as they have been inbred to get consistent results.

Landrace seeds:

A mix of varieties grown in a particular area for a number of years. They will be adapted to that soil and climate and may have considerable variability to cope with changing conditions.

How to save seed

It is easy to save seed: just let your best plants flower and leave the flower heads to set seed. Harvest the seed when fully dry, separate out the seed from the husks and other debris.

Some plants grow and come to seed in the same year (annuals) These are the easiest to save seed from. Examples are lettuce, sunflowers, tomatoes, peas and beans.

Biennnial plants will flower in the second year, so these need to be left over the winter. It may be easiest to transplant the best plants to a different area so they don't get in the way of your growing plan. Examples of these are most brassica, leeks and other alliums, root crops such as beetroot, parsnips, carrots and swede.

Seeds in fruits, such as tomatoes and strawberries, will need to be extracted from the pulp of the fruit and dried. This can be done simply by picking out the seeds and wiping onto some kitchen towel and leaving to dry. They can be stored on the paper until it is time to sow them. Alternatively the seeds and juicy pulp can be put in a little jar with water to cover and left at room temperature for a couple of days. A layer of mould will form on top, remove this and rinse the seeds in a sieve until clean, then spread out on a towel to dry.

Put the cleaned, dried seeds in a paper bag. Label them with the variety and date. Then store them in a cool, dark place – you now have your own locally grown seeds, well done!

Further (free) information sources:

<https://www.realseeds.co.uk/seedsavinginfo.html>

<https://permies.com/t/131246/Seed-Saving-Towels-Paper-Towels>

<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/saving-landrace-seeds-zbcz1307/>

<https://seedambassadors.org/docs/seedzine4handout.pdf>

https://shop.seedsavers.org/site/pdf/Seed%20Saving%20Guide_2017.pdf

<https://seedalliance.org/publications/seed-saving-guide-gardeners-farmers/>

Seed swaps:

<https://goingtoseed.org/>

The information In this leaflet is given in good faith - have fun saving!

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