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# Getting Started With

# Seed Saving



## Included:

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- And, More!



*An eBook by BBB Seed Heirloom Vegetable & Wildflower Seeds  
www.BBBSeed.com*

# Why Seed Saving?

Now you might think that because we are a company that SELLS seed, we wouldn't be talking to you about saving seed for free. But we love seeds! And in a world in which only a few massive corporations own the rights to most of the seeds that are sold, we think the more people that are saving seed, especially the heirloom varieties and native varieties that can't be patented, *the better off we all are.*

## Getting Started

An easy way to start saving seed is when you see a flower that you really like - and that you want more of - tie a string loosely around the stem when it is in bloom, so you can find it later. You have to leave the flower on the stem to let the seed head develop until the seed is mature.

A good rule of thumb is to wait until the stem leading up to the seedpod starts to dry. Keep the seed dry and dark and cool until you're ready to plant it.

Lots of plants cross pollinate, so you might need to research more about your plant.

## Quick Tip

Don't bother with squashes or corn. They've cross-pollinated with plants that live on the next block (plants don't know about property lines) and you'll end up with weird mutant squashes or corn that's beautiful but tastes like chalk.



# Saving Heirloom Vegetable Seeds

## What are "heirloom" vegetables?

An heirloom vegetable is a non-hybrid, open-pollinated variety that has been passed down from generation to generation and, in some cases, can be traced back hundreds of years. These seed lines have been carefully selected to maintain uniformity and consistency for germination.

*Heirloom seeds become 'heirloom' because they exhibit exceptional traits desired by the gardener.*

Often this means the plants are more colorful, flavorful, unique, or have great germination and vigor. Often the traits are location dependent. Meaning, seeds planted in one garden will not produce in the same manner in another location. We encourage you to try heirloom seeds, see which have the qualities for your area to become your favorites and make them into your own very special seed line.

## Saving seeds is easy and fun.

Gardeners have found that as seed is selected and saved over many years, production is increased and the quality is improved, creating plants that will produce best for that locale and will resist diseases and pests of that locale. Contributing to genetic diversity strengthens the ecosystem. Historically farmers and local gardeners have created and

sustained this rich genetic heritage by learning to save their own seeds from varieties that perform best in their own mini-ecosystems. The current trend toward mono crops where only one seed type is used to produce a crop worldwide is eliminating the ability to be able to find genetic variations that will withstand emerging pathogens and climate changes.



## Planting your crop

Start with good Heirloom Seed varieties. Keep in mind that to allow the plants to produce seed and to allow the seed to fully mature, you will have to allow for a longer growing season. Starting plants indoors and arranging for protection from frost in the late season can do this. You will be growing some for food or flower harvest and some for seed production. Fully mature seeds will be viable (able to germinate) and produce vigorous plants. You may want to do some research on the different flower types for proper pollination techniques and plant with row/species separation in mind, to prevent cross-pollination.

*Continued...*

You may look into caging procedures to isolate species that are in flower at the same time. By caging different plants on alternate days, you can take advantage of the pollinators to do the work without cross-pollinating your crop. Cage one plant or group on one day and early the next day, before the bees wake, transfer your cage to a different plant or group. Some crops are biennial and do not produce seed until the next year, so you will need to determine whether you should leave the roots in the ground over the winter or dig and store them.

### Harvesting and collecting seed

When selecting plants for saving seeds, look for favorable characteristics such as; freeze and cold tolerance, heat tolerance, adaptability, winter hardiness, early maturation, vigor (strong germination and growth), flavor, color, size, texture, etc. Also, look for desirable traits such as; vine or plant type, seed type, specific disease resistance. Plan to be ready to harvest the seed as they mature. Often the pods will pop open when you are not around to collect the seed and it will be lost.

Allow the seed pods to remain on the plant in the ground for as long as possible. Usually the seed will not continue to mature after the pods are cut from the plant. The process of cleaning and separating (thresh) the seeds from the chaff (pods and stems) is easy for a small home gardener. Break apart the pods by crushing or breaking the pods and

collecting the seed. Sometimes the chaff can be blown away from the seed, by pouring the seed onto a pan in front of a small fan or by using cleaning screens that come with different sized openings.

### Storage

The rules are COOL, DARK and DRY.

**Cool** – store below 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Dark** – complete darkness is best, but partial light is tolerable.

**Dry** – make sure that the mature harvested seed is thoroughly dry before storing.

Small amounts of seeds may be put into plastic bags and labeled and then put several bags into an airtight jar. Plastic bags alone are not air and moisture resistant. Silica gel may be purchased to ensure long-term storage will remain moisture free especially in climates with high humidity. Allow jars that have been brought out of storage to a warmer area to come to current temperature before opening to avoid moisture condensation.



Start saving your favorites and developing your very own Heirloom seed line to pass down to future generations.

### Additional resources:

“Seed to Seed” detailed getting started publication, <http://www.seedsavers.org>

Easy instructions for seed saving, [http://www.seedsave.org/issi/issi\\_904.html](http://www.seedsave.org/issi/issi_904.html)

# Seed-Saving: Collecting Dry Seed

## Dry Processing

It's easy to save seeds from plants that produce pods, husks, and other dry casings such as peas, beans, and flowers. The technique is called "dry processing" and is faster than collecting seed from fleshy, pulpy fruits such as tomatoes and cucumbers. Seeds that are dry processed can be allowed to dry right on the plants unless there's wet weather in the forecast.

Gardeners collect these seeds in different ways. Seeds often fall where they may naturally, little by little. Some gardeners make collecting them easy and as the seeds begin to mature, they secure paper bags over the seed heads and attach them to the stems of the plants. Thus, catching any seeds that ripen early.



Once you have the seed, you're actually left with a mixture of seeds and what's called "chaff" as opposed to pure seed. Chaff is pod or husk coverings and other debris that fall in with the seeds. Separating the seeds from the chaff is a technique called "threshing." Threshing is used to remove the coverings from the seeds. Multitasking machines that can harvest, thresh, and winnow the seeds all at once do commercial threshing. For the home gardener, a bag, pillowcase, or small sack is all that's necessary.

Simply put the collected seeds into the bag, secure the ends, and roll it around, lightly crushing the contents a bit. Don't get all-macho on me and break out a hammer for this -- you don't want to damage the seeds. For the tinier ones, there's nothing wrong with using a flat board to gently press on the seeds to loosen the chaff.

## Winnowing

The next step of dry harvesting is called "winnowing." Winnowing is just a five-dollar word for getting the loosened chaff off of your seeds before you store them. In nature, this would be taken care of by the wind, but you can use the same idea by placing the seeds into a bowl and shaking the bowl around a bit. Most of the chaff is lighter than the seeds and it'll rise to the top.

Be sure to have a large sheet underneath your workspace so if any seeds are blown off with the debris, you can retrieve them. Only on a day without wind, work outdoors. Now, blow gently into the seeds to remove the lighter-weight chaff. Repeat this process until all (or most) of the chaff is gone. Be sure all wayward seeds are removed from the sheet underneath before you do any winnowing with other varieties. Another option is to use a screen or sifter where the holes are smaller than the chaff to simply sift them apart. The size of the sifter holes will depend on the size of the seeds and the chaff.

## Saving Tomato Seed

To get the best tomato plants, you need the best seed. If you want to save your own tomato seeds, you need to select from the *very best tomatoes* this year.

Timing is critical.

**Step 1:** Pick your best, most ripe (even to the point of over-ripe) tomato, save and dry the seed. Choosing an over-ripe veggie will insure the seed has fully developed. If you wait for a frost or freeze before you pick the fruit or veggie, most of the seed will not be developed enough to be viable next year.

**Step 2:** Once you've selected an overripe tomato to be next year's seeds, be sure to taste the tomato to make sure it's the perfect tomato.

**Step 3:** Let the tomato ferment a bit in a saucer before letting the seed dry and then save it in a cool dry place for next year.

When spring comes plant your tomato seed!



## Slow-Roasted Tomatoes

*By Chiot's Run*



You can use any kind of tomato, from cherries to beefsteaks; the larger the tomatoe, the longer it takes.

Cut the tomatoes in half, lay skin side down on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper (the parchment helps get them up later). If you want to, drizzle with olive oil and some freshly chopped herbs and sprinkle with salt and pepper, or simply roast as is. Roast in a 225 degree oven for 4-8 hours or until reduced in size and slightly moist, cooking time depends on size of tomatoes and your oven. You can taste one after 3-4 hours and you'll be able to tell if it's done or not. It should taste like concentrated tomato with a slightly sweet tang. If it's still acidic and sour, roast for a while longer.

Freeze to preserve using cookie sheets, then store in a large bag.

*You may also enjoy these great resources available for download at BBBSeed.com*

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## A Beginner's Guide to Gardening



**Included:**

- What you'll need to get started
- Working with seeds
- A list of 10 easy to grow veggie plants
- Growing Your Own Flower Arrangement
  - Getting into a routine that will take only 15 min a day

Everything you need to grow your own food -and flowers, too!

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## A Gardener's Guide to Pollinators

Your source for becoming a part of the solution



One out of every three to four mouthfuls of food we eat results from the actions of pollinators!

## Your Guide to Organic Pest Control



*Integrated Pest Management or IPM is a logical and effective way to control the pests in your garden while remaining respectful of beneficial insects and mindful of the environment.*

www.BBBSeed.com *An eBook of BBB Seed Heirloom Vegetable & Wildflower Seeds*

## About Us

BBB Seed is a small, family-owned company based in Boulder, Colorado that specializes in the distribution of wildflower seeds, heirloom and organic heirloom vegetable seeds and native grasses.

Content for this eBook has been provided by *Sandy Swegel, Rebecca Hansen* and *Chris McLaughlin*. Images are sourced on our website at <http://www.bbbseed.com>

