

SEED SAVING

WHY SAVE SEEDS

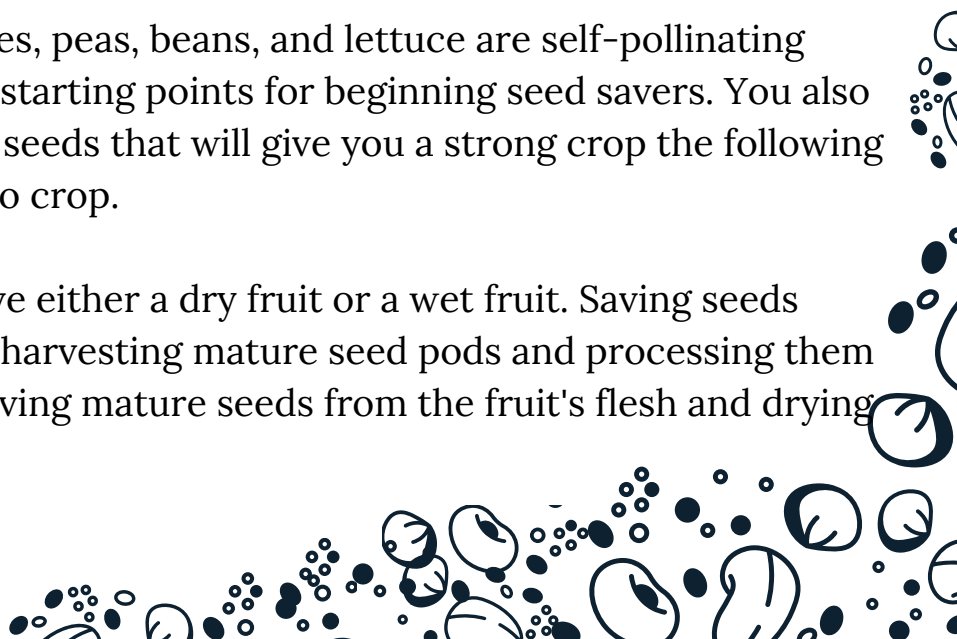
Not only is seed saving economical, but it also helps maintain crop biodiversity, social resilience, and cultural significance of plants. Biodiversity helps the food system hold up against adverse environmental conditions. This will be increasingly important as these conditions are made worse by climate change. Some varieties may be able to resist drought, others might withstand high winds, and so on. The greater the genetic diversity, the more food systems are protected from extreme fluctuations and shortages of resources.

HOW TO SAVE SEEDS

KNOW YOUR PLANTS: Learn about the qualities of the crops from which you are trying to save seeds. Annual plants, such as tomatoes, lettuce, and beans bloom, go to seed, and die every season. Biennials, such as carrots and onions, only flower and go to seed every other season, which means you will have to wait to save their seeds. Perennials, such as raspberries and blueberries, flower every season but can survive for many years. Maturity of seeds is another important factor. Some seeds may not be mature at the typical point of consumption and you may need to wait until the fruit is over-ripe. You can use this information to tailor your seed saving practices to the specific plant seeds you want to save.

PLAN FOR SEED SAVING: Tomatoes, peas, beans, and lettuce are self-pollinating annuals. These crops are excellent starting points for beginning seed savers. You also should plan to plant the amount of seeds that will give you a strong crop the following season, which will vary from crop to crop.

COLLECT YOUR SEEDS: Crops have either a dry fruit or a wet fruit. Saving seeds from dry fruits may simply require harvesting mature seed pods and processing them for storage. Wet fruit require removing mature seeds from the fruit's flesh and drying them completely.



HOW TO STORE SEEDS

Good storage practices can prolong the life of your seeds. When preparing seeds for storage, check that they are mature, free of disease and pests, and dry. Then label your seeds with their name and record any other important details. Store seeds in a cool, dark, and dry place that is safe from pests.



BEST PRACTICES

RECORD-KEEPING: Detailed notes about the seeds you save is highly important information to keep with the seeds. Keep track of the name of the plant, number of seeds collected, date planted, date of maturity, date of seed harvest, and any other important information.

SAVE SEEDS FROM THE HEALTHIEST PLANTS: Healthy and robust plants are more likely to produce healthy seeds. Being somewhat selective when deciding which plants to collect seeds from can be beneficial to the long-term resilience of your crops. Saving seeds from plants with ideal size, color, and flavor can also help ensure that next year's crops will inherit favorable traits.

AVOID CROSS-POLLINATION: Different crops within the same species can pollinate each other, which causes plants to have traits that differ from their parent plants. If you would like to keep your plant variety pure, then you may consider isolating plants from the same species. This involves keeping some distance between crops of different varieties within the same species. Isolation distances vary based on the particular crop. For example, crops that are pollinated through wind or insects (corn, cucumbers, squash) will require greater isolation distance than crops that are self-pollinated (tomatoes, peppers, beans).



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