

## Seed-Saving Guide

### Self-Pollinating Annual Vegetables

**Beans:** Beans are ready to harvest when the pods are dry and brittle, and the beans rattle inside.

**Eggplant:** Harvest when very ripe. Scoop out seeds, wash away pulp and dry.

**Lettuce:** Cut stalks when about half of the tiny flowers are white and fluffy. Or pick individual flowers. Rub off seeds. Winnow or blow away the fluff, leaving seeds.

**Peas:** Harvest when pods turn yellow or brown and peas rattle inside. If not completely dry, pull up the whole plant and hang upside down to dry indoors.

**Pepper:** peppers are self-pollinating, bees occasionally cross-pollinate.

Separate by 50 feet. Harvest when very ripe. Scrape out seeds, rinse and dry.

**Tomato:** Pick the best ripest fruits. Ferment for three days. Remove floating mold and seeds. Rinse till clean. Dry. Separate varieties by minimum of 10 feet.

### Cross-Pollinating Annual Vegetables

(I – insect pollinated. W – wind pollinated)

**Broccoli (I):** Start early indoors and transplant outside for fall seed harvest. Cut the stalks when the seeds are dry and brittle, dry on trays, thresh and clean.

**Corn (W):** Plant at least ten rows of twenty feet three feet apart (at least two hundred plants) Why? Corn needs to cross-pollinate with a wide population to stay strong. Pollen is carried by wind from tassels of one plant to silks of another. Seeds which are not pollinated do not form kernels. When kernels are mature and dry, strip down husks and hang together till dry on cob.

**Cucumber (I):** Let grow on vine till large, yellow/brown and hard. Cure for 2–3 weeks. Scoop out seeds and ferment for 3–4 days. Rinse. Discard floating seed. Dry. Cucumbers cross each other unless isolated by 1/2 mile

**Radish (I):** Harvest seed stalks, Hang until dry. Collect seeds

**Spinach (W):** Pick later slower bolting seed stalks. Cut, strip off seeds.

**Sunflower (I):** Harvest when mature. Store and plant in shell.

**Squash, Pumpkin, Gourd (I):** Let grow big and hard, esp summer squash. Leave to cure and mature for about a month after picking. Scoop out seeds, rinse and dry. Grow different varieties of the same species separately.

**Citrullus** – watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*) and citron

**Cucurbita** – squash, pumpkin, zucchini, some gourds

- **Cucurbita maxima:** hubbard, banana, buttercup, turban squash, acorn, giant pumpkins
- **Cucurbita mixta:** cylindrical, curved fruits that are bulbous at the apex.
- **Cucurbita moschata:** long and oblong shape instead of round, tan skin.
- **Cucurbita pepo:** true pumpkin bright orange skin and hard, woody, stems, also summer squashes, zucchini, buttercup, sugar pie pumpkin

**Cucumis** – cucumber & various melons

- **Cucumis melo:** most melons and Armenian cucumber
- **Cucumis sativus:** cucumbers

If gourd family seeds come under a different scientific name (Bolded name), and are not hybrid, they can be grown side by side and the seeds saved

## Saving and Sharing Seeds

The seeds you borrow from the SMG Seed Library are free; all we ask is that you return more seeds than you received to help our seed library grow. Saving your seeds saves you money, and helps preserve our seed heritage.

### Choosing Seeds

The seeds that you'll find in our library are all open-pollinated or heirloom varieties, meaning seeds saved from these plants will produce fruit the next season which will be the same as the parent plant. They have been grown in SMG and came from a Canadian source. Each seed is listed as to how easy it is to save: Easy(green), medium(yellow), hard(red)

### Easy Seeds

Easy seeds are great for beginners and grow plants that are less likely to cross-pollinate with other plants in that family.  
*Tip: Stick with one variety of a plant, or separate different varieties with a taller buffer crop or distance.*

### Medium Seeds

Medium seeds have a greater chance to cross pollinate with similar varieties. Cucumber family being a prime example.  
*Tip: Choose only one variety from each family or separate similar plants by placing them a good distance apart, like in the front and back yard.*

### Advanced Seeds

Advanced seeds grow plants that are wind or insect pollinated and very likely to cross-pollinate with other plant varieties, even weeds. This group includes vegetables that require 2 years to produce seed.

Tips: Stick to a single plant variety, stagger growing times, and other advanced techniques to preserve the purity of the seed. It's also very important to check the botanical name to ensure which plants are related and susceptible to cross-pollination.

## Three Ways to Save Seeds

At harvest time, please take some extra steps to save seeds. Save from your strongest, tastiest, and most vigorous plants.



### Dry Seed Processing

For plants with seeds that grow on the outside of the plant.

- Allow the seed to dry on the plant, and collect the seedpods before they break open. Some seeds will need to be further dried until hard.
- For plants with seeds that develop in the center of the flower, allow the plant to dry. When the stem holding the seed head turns brown, harvest the seeds.

*Tip: Collect dry seeds under dry, warm conditions to prevent mold and reduce additional drying time.*

### Wet Seed Processing

For seeds that grow inside the fleshy fruit of the plant.

- Rinse off the seeds and dry them thoroughly.
- If the seeds have a gel-like coating, use the fermentation process.

*Tip: If you're not sure if your seeds have a coating, float them in a small amount of water. You'll be able to see the coating if it floats.*



## Fermentation Seed Processing

For seeds with a gel-like coating.

- Mix the seeds and the seed juice with a little water in a small plastic or glass container with a lid.

- Allow the seeds to ferment for 4 - 6 days.

- When a layer of mold has formed on top of the water and the seeds sink, the fermentation is complete. Add more water, swish it around, and remove the mold and pulp. The good seeds will sink to the bottom, while the bad seeds will float to the top. Remove the bad seeds.

- Drain the water from the seeds and set them out on a plate to dry thoroughly. Once the seeds are completely dry store label with date and name your seeds and store in an air tight container in the bottom of your fridge.

- Return some dated and labeled seeds to the Seed library  
*Tip: Use the fermentation process for seeds from tomatoes, cucumbers, some squash, and some melons.*



A commitment to growing plants from seeds is a gift to you. And the seeds you save and return are a gift to your community.