

Seed Saving for Beginners

Seeds for Beginners:

Basil	Marigold
Beans	Nasturtium
Broad Beans	Okra
Capsicum	Pea
Coriander	Sage
Garlic Chives	Snake Bean
Lettuce	Tomato



Growing

Start with some of the easy plants listed. Nurture them carefully so they are in tip-top shape when they are forming their seeds.

Choose several of the healthiest, most productive plants for saving seed, and tag with a ribbon so they do not get consumed.

Some methods to avoid cross-pollination by wind or insects transferring pollen from plants of another variety or species:

- Grow only one variety
- Isolate by suitable distance
- Bag unopened flowers of capsicums
- Plant multiple varieties from one species at different times of the growing season to avoid overlapping flowering times.

Harvesting and Processing

Select best fruits, pods or seed heads, and harvest only when fully mature. Collect after morning dew, in warm, dry conditions and label.

Dry Cleaning – Seeds that mature drily in pods or husks such as beans, peas, beetroot, brassicas, carrot, onions, and most garden flowers can be dried on the bush. If it is rainy, pull out entire plant, and hang in a dry place until pods are dried out (pillowcases are ideal). Seeds are then carefully rolled or crushed out of their casings, and sieved or winnowed to separate the viable seeds from the chaff. Kitchen sieves, colanders or mesh screens are useful.

Winnowing Seeds

Using shallow containers outdoors, pour seeds from a higher to lower bowl. Gently toss in air, blow over surface. The breeze carries away lighter seeds and debris, while heavier, more fertile seeds stay.

Wet Cleaning – Seeds that are carried in moist flesh such as pumpkins, eggplant, capsicum, squash and melons need to be rinsed clean of flesh. Soaking briefly in a jar of water can help separate good seed from debris. Discard any floating debris, then rinse and drain seeds in sieve. Place on plate or baking paper to dry (7 to 10 days). Tomatoes and cucumbers can be fermented in water until a layer of mould forms and seeds sink. Drain off debris, rinse and dry as above.

Storing

Containers and Labelling- Options for containers to store dried seeds:

- Envelopes
- Recycled, clean paper bags
- Sealed glass jars
- Ziplock bags
- Donation bags (free at the library)

Record basic seed details, including type, variety, date harvested and any other useful information. Place seed packets in rodent-proof storage container.

**TIP – small packets of silica gel crystals, powdered milk, or rice placed in the container, with the seed packets can help absorb moisture.*

Store seeds in a dark, dry, cool location as light will halve the lifespan of some seeds. A cupboard or drawer is sufficient for up to six months. If you are storing longer than six months, the fridge is ideal (but not the freezer).

When removing seeds from the fridge, allow the container to come to room temperature for a day or two before opening to avoid condensation. Most vegetable seeds will stay viable for 3 to 4 years if stored correctly.

Why save seed?

Save money – Home-saved seeds are free

Connect with your garden – The more seeds you save, the more you learn about botany and the plant kingdom.

Help save the bees – While you wait for your flowers to produce seeds, they are providing invaluable food for bees, butterflies and beetles.

Home-saved seeds germinate better – Fresh seeds germinate at a higher rate and are more vigorous



Join Mundaring Seed Savers – A collaboration between Mundaring Library which manages the Seed Collection, and a volunteer group of local home growers who curate and process donated seeds. It is a great way to develop or share your seed saving knowledge and skills, keeping the Seed Library vital and sustainable. Contact forms are available at the library.

www.facebook.com/groups/mundaringseedsavers