

SAVING SEEDS

Glossary

Organic: adheres to certain regulations regarding what kind of fertilizers and pesticides can be used in production; GMO products cannot at this time be classified as organic

Open pollinated: these plants have been selectively bred over many generations to exhibit certain traits in the cultivar; they are stable (though there will be slight variation of individual plants within the cultivar); seeds saved from these plants will grow the same type of plant

Heirloom: these plants are open pollinated and the specific cultivar is over fifty years old (though sometimes the term may be used to refer to any OP cultivar); heirloom varieties are usually more nutrient dense and do well with organic methods of growing

Hybrid: these plants are a cross between two varieties; within the group they are generally uniform (such as being ready to harvest at the same time); seeds produced by these plants will grow a (usually less desirable) different version of the plant, or may be sterile; may be called “F1 hybrid”

GMO: Genetically Modified Organism; generally refers to organisms that have been developed in a laboratory by inserting genetic material into plants or altering the genetic material using genetic engineering; this contrasts with natural selection or selective breeding, which occurs over a longer period of time

*there are many controversial issues with the usage of GMOs specifically regarding food sovereignty, the moral basis behind patenting living organisms, monopolies in the food system, and pesticide use

RULES OF (GREEN) THUMB

Seeds generally become viable after the optimal time of harvest for edible use.

Lettuce, spinach, etc will “bolt” in hot weather; they begin growing flowers and producing seeds. When this happens the leaves taste bitter; the plant’s energy / resources are going toward seed production rather than leaf production.

Seeds should be kept in a cool, dark, dry place to keep them viable. One good method is to put seeds in a mason jar with a silica gel packet and keep the jar in the refrigerator.

Most of all, have fun!

TOMATO

Seed Saving

Cut a tomato and scoop out the seeds and gunk. Put in a clear glass jar. Add water to the jar, and leave in the jar for about a week. Strain out everything except the seeds that sank to the bottom; these are the viable seeds. Rinse these seeds and let dry on a paper towel. Store.

Alternatively, harvest ripe fruits, and mash. Place in a container with a loosely fitting lid. Let sit at room temperature until bubbles stop forming (usually under two days), stirring every twelve hours. Separate gunk from seeds and rinse seeds, then spread them into a single layer on a towel and let dry for about three weeks. Store.

SPINACH

Plant Care

Spinach is a cold season crop; it can be planted in the ground earlier than many vegetables and will do better in cooler summer temperatures. One way to keep spinach from bolting in midsummer is to plant in beneath bean or zucchini trellises earlier in the season; as the other plants climb up the trellises in hotter weather they will shade the spinach.

Seed Saving

Allow spinach to bolt and produce flowers and seeds. The plants that produce seeds are female; when the seeds are brown collect them from the plant and allow them to dry for about two weeks. Store.

BEAN

Plant Care

Like spinach, beans are a cool season crop. They are a vining plant, so provide support for them to climb, such as a trellis. Poles on opposite sides of the bed with string between them can provide a structure for them to grow on as well. Harvest beans as they are produced in order to keep getting more. To get seeds, allow the pod to dry on the plant. The seeds will be bigger, dry, and hard once this happens.

Seed Saving

Once pods have dried and turned brown, pick them and dry them for about a week out of direct sunlight until the seeds rattle in the pods when lightly shaken. Open the pods and take out the seeds. Store.

RESOURCES

Saving More Than Seeds: Practices and Politics of Seed Saving by Catherine Phillips

Saving Seeds, Preserving Taste: Heirloom Seed Savers in Appalachia by Billy F. Best

Seed Libraries and Other Means of Keeping Seeds in the Hands of the People by Cindy Conner

The New Seed Starters Handbook by Nancy Bubel

The Complete Guide to Saving Seeds: 322 Vegetables, Herbs, Fruits, Flowers, Trees, and Shrubs
by Robert E and Cheryl Moore Gough

<https://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/basic-seed-saving-guide/>

Hudson Valley Seed Library (seedlibrary.org)

Seed Savers Exchange (seedsavers.org)

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds (rareseeds.com)

Johnny's Selected Seeds (johnnyseeds.com)

Territorial Seed Company (territorialseed.com)

Turtle Tree Seed Initiative (turtletreeseed.org)

High Mowing Organic Seeds (highmowingseeds.com)