

Seed Harvest

Patience is key before harvesting, the time periods for seeds to become ready varies from crop to crop. Generally the maturity of the seeds will be indicated by a change in color or texture. Some seeds, such as carrot and lettuce seeds will need to be picked early, before they ripen to avoid seeds shattering and being lost to the wind.

Collect your seed pods or cut your crops on a nice dry day. Place them in a paper bag and hang them in a well ventilated, dry and warm environment. A greenhouse or airing cupboard would work well but beware that the temperatur should not exceed 35°C. Once again, do not try to dry your seeds to quickly as you might damage them and simply lose all chances for germination.

Once dried, separate and clean up your seeds. Store in a dry cool place.

For more detailed information check out the book *Seed Saving* by Sue Stickland, or go to the following link: www.gardenorganic.co.uk/seedsaving



Seed Saving



Why Save Your Own?

Saving and swapping seeds have a wealth of benefits, from the financial advance to maintaining food security and protecting biodiversity, rare species and seed genetics, and varieties that are more attuned to local climate conditions. Seed saving and swapping can be fun. It is also a form of local activism! Stick it to Monsanto!



Seed Saving Techniques

For some crops, it can be very simple, such as peas or beans— what you eat is also the seed you save. Some might need specific methods or even isolation, but overall for most plants this is never too difficult. What you need to know: How much space it will take up, how long it will take to produce seeds, and what you need to do to keep your variety pure.

Some of the crops are annual, which means they need one season to flower and give seeds. The majority of them though are biennials, which means that they need two growing seasons to produce seeds before they then die. Finally some are perennials, where they grow over many years and often do not only produce seed but multiple by other means too, e.g asparagus.

Start

Even annual plants might need some more time to go to seed, often the growing season can be too short, so it can be useful to start them off early in a greenhouse. Start by choosing the plants you want to keep for seed saving and clearly mark them and leave those to run to seed. Start with just one or two varieties first, such as beans or peas.



Pollination & Purity

Some plants might require some attention to avoid cross pollination with other crops, and you might need to take some specific measures to keep your variety, e.g brassicas. Only plants of the same species are potentially a threat. Some measures such as keeping the right distance in between crops can help, but it will vary from variety to variety. Some might require simple physical barriers such as bagging with fleece or small cages.

