

Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 27

Saving Seeds

Why Save Seeds

Gardeners were saving seeds long before there were commercial seed producers. In fact, most of the vegetables and flowers we have today owe their existence to these early gardeners who, with an eye for quality, saved the seeds of their best plants, sowed them the next year and, in this way, improved the species.

One of the best reasons to save seeds is so that you can share them with friends and neighbours and, of course, have them for your own garden next spring.

What Seeds You Can Save

Do not save seeds from hybrid plants as the resulting plants may have characteristics different from the parents.

Vegetable seeds that are easy to save are tomato, pepper, bean, and summer squash.

- ❖ **Tomato:** Squeeze the seeds from a fully ripe tomato onto a paper towel and leave to dry. Once seeds are dry, remove them from the pulp and store.
- ❖ **Pepper:** Select a mature pepper, cut open and scrape the seeds onto a paper towel and leave them to dry completely.
- ❖ **Beans and Peas:** Leave the pods on the plant until they are “rattle” dry, pick and store in brown paper bags.
- ❖ **Summer Squash:** Leave summer squash and cucumbers on the vine until after frost, separate the seed from the pulp and dry at room temperature.

Flower seeds that are easy to save are morning glory, sweet pea, nasturtium, petunia, marigold and cleome.

- ❖ **Morning Glory:** The seeds are inside small, round, paper-like balls the size of small pearls. Once they turn light tan, clip them off carefully, being certain not to break the papery husk.
- ❖ **Sweet Peas:** Follow the procedure for beans and peas (above).
- ❖ **Nasturtiums:** Nasturtiums form hard, small, pea-like seeds that are easy to detect and pop out.
- ❖ **Petunias:** The seeds, found in small balls similar to morning glory are extremely tiny seeds, almost like powder. They are best stored in a small white envelope (white so that the seeds can be seen).
- ❖ **Marigolds:** Cut the flower tops off, and watch them dry into thin sticks about ½" long, tan and black. Pinch them apart and store.
- ❖ **Cleome:** Dangling 3" pods that look like beans contain the seeds. Let them dry completely on the plant, cut the strings where they attach and store in a brown paper bag.

How to Store Saved Seeds

Most seeds can be stored in opaque, airtight jars, but legumes (beans and peas) prefer to be stored in brown paper bags. Label your containers with the variety, date and other relevant information, and store them in a cool, dry place.

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