



6 TIPS FOR SAVING SEEDS



Seed saving is fundamental to preserving biodiversity, plant genetic diversity, and protecting our food independence. For

millennia, people around the world have been collecting, processing, storing, and saving seeds. But, in recent years, small, local seed breeders have been replaced by large corporations that now control our seed supply, producing primarily genetically engineered crops designed to be grown with toxic pesticides (which these same companies make and sell). At their hand, we are losing plant diversity at an alarming rate.

We have the power to fight back by growing and saving seeds in our own backyards. Don't worry – this ancient tradition doesn't require you to be a formal botanist to participate. Here are six tips that will get you started!

Be part of the resistance, save your seeds!

1

Assess the condition of the whole plant.

When selecting which plants to save seeds from, you'll first want to check the plants for disease and insect resistance, drought tolerance, vigor, color, earliness or fruiting, lateness of bolting, hardiness, uniformity, and trueness. You can influence your future crop characteristics by selecting seeds based on these characteristics (though it's not guaranteed the same traits will be expressed in the next generation, over time you'll be able to influence the traits of your seeds).

2

Remove unwanted plants prior to flowering.

This may be challenging for those of you who are small-scale gardeners since it may mean pulling out plants that would otherwise produce edible fruit, but removing plants with undesirable characteristics prior to flowering will ensure their genes don't influence your seed stock.



Connect and share your seeds with a community of seed savers, visit CFS's **Global Seed Network: globalseednetwork.org**



3 Collect seed from the most plants possible. In order to maintain genetic diversity in your seed collection, it's important to collect seed from the greatest possible number of desirable plants. This diversity is critical for hardiness and vigor, which will influence the ability of plants to adapt to varying environmental conditions.

4 Learn how to harvest seeds, experimenting with different techniques to learn what best suits you and your plants. There are two types of seed harvesting used for different types of crops: dry processing and wet processing. Seeds that grow in pods or husks, like corn, lettuce, radish, and legumes, can usually be left on the plant until they are completely dry and are then harvested individually by removing the entire plant (dry processing). By contrast, seeds embedded in the flesh of fruits, like tomatoes, squash, and berries, are harvested when they are ripe and processed right away before the fruit rots (wet processing). It's important to know when your seeds are mature, as sometimes this can be after the fruit is ripe for eating.

5 Store your seeds safely. Store your seeds in airtight containers, preferably glass or metal, and keep your seeds in a cool, dry, dark location. Glass jars with rubber gaskets, like baby food jars and canning jars, are perfect. Plastic bags, like Ziplock, are not moisture-proof and should not be used.

6 Keep good records. Be sure to label your seeds! The most important information to record is the species name, variety, and date of harvest. If possible, it's also useful to include other information about the seeds in your records, including: common names, historical or cultural information, location grown, germination rate, days to maturity, plant descriptors (height, fruit size, color, shape), productivity, ideal growing conditions, and theoretical seed viability.



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