Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Putnam County

Terravest Corporate Park
1 Geneva Rd
Brewster NY 12590
p 845..278.6738
f 845.278.6761

Saving Seeds

From Which Plants Can You Save Seeds?

Seeds from annual plants, those that flower and produce seed the same year they were planted, are the easiest to start with. They rarely require special treatment to germinate. Some common annuals include beans, tomatoes, squash and flowers like zinnias, marigolds, and alyssum.

What will grow when I plant these seeds?

If the plant you collected the seeds from was a hybrid, your new seedling may grow into a plant with different characteristics. Here are three different types of pollination you should know about.

- **Inbred or Self-pollinating plants** are those plants that produce both male and female plant parts on the same flower. Pollen from the male part of the flower fertilizes the egg in the female part of the flower so that the new plant has two very similar sets of genes. Thus a seed from a self-pollinating plant will look very much like the parent. These kinds of seeds are ideal for saving. You know what you are getting when you plant them. Common examples include beans, peas, and marigolds.

- **Out-crossed or Cross-pollinated plants** require pollen from a different plant to fertilize the egg. Some out-crossed plants have the male and female parts on separate flowers, like corn or squash. Others have the male and female parts on the same flower but will only accept pollen from a different flower or plant, like apples, which require a separate pollinating tree. The progeny from these crosses are genetically diverse, which means you may get a plant with very different characteristics.

- **Hybrid plants**, sometimes referred to as "F1" result from crossing two inbred lines. All of the seeds in the first generation of this cross will have the same two sets of genetic material and thus be uniform in characteristic. However seeds from these F1 plants may exhibit characteristics from either parent. Saving seeds from hybrid plants can give you a mixed bag. But sometimes you may also stumble across a real keeper.

Out-crossed or Cross-pollinated Plants

Beets	Radish
Broccoli	Spinach
Cabbage	Squash
Carrots	Turnips
Corn	Pumpkins
Cucumbers	& Most
Melon	Annual
Onions	Flowers

Inbred or Self-Pollinated Plants

Beans	Clarkia
Lettuce	Lupine
Eggplants	Snapdragon
Peas	Stock
Peppers	Sweetpea
Tomatoes	
Double-flowered Asters	

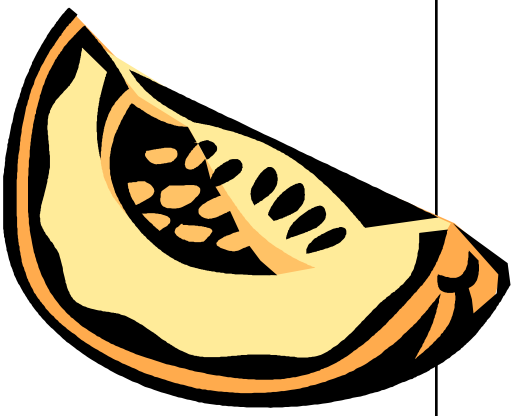
Which seeds should I harvest?

- Annuals are easy to start with. These are plants that flower and produce seed in the same season they are planted.

    - It's hard to tell if your seeds are harboring a fungus or disease, so choose seeds from a healthy plant with well-formed leaves and fruit. Observe plant health and habit throughout the growing season to make sure this is a plant with staying power.

    - Don't wait until the end of the season and take what's left. Instead choose the biggest, healthiest seed pods. If you only choose seed at the end of the season you may inadvertently select plants with late blooming or late fruiting habits.

    - Allow flower heads, fruit, or seedpods to ripen as long as possible on the plant before husks dehisce, or split open.

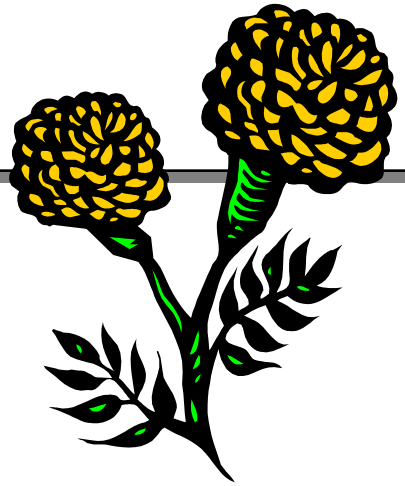


Storing Seed

Make sure your seed is dry before you store it. Lay it out on a paper towel or piece of paper. Inspect for pieces of fruit or hull that may still be attached to the seeds. Moist seed, or seed with fruit stuck to it, may grow moldy. Once completely dry, store seed in a cool, dry environment.

The refrigerator is an ideal location, but make sure your seeds are in an airtight package. Label all of your envelopes with the plant name and date you collected the seeds, and store them in a plastic zip-seal bag.

Most seeds will stay viable for 3-4 years, with the exception of Onions and Parsnips (1 yr) and Corn (2 yrs).



Some **cross-pollinated** plants can make for very strange combinations. So unless you are growing these crops all by themselves, and your neighbors are not growing anything similar, you may end up with some very different plants if you save these seeds.

Squash, such as Zucchini, Acorn, Butternut, and Pumpkin will all cross with each other, so seed saved from these plants may result in very altered offspring.

Cole crops, such as Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Kale, Kohlrabi, and Brussels sprouts will also cross-pollinate if they are blooming at the same time.