



BEGINNER, EXPERIENCED OR EXPERT?

SEEeD'S GUIDE TO HELPING YOU TO CHOOSE WHAT SEEDS TO SAVE

BEGINNER, VERY EASY

These vegetables are very easy for the novice seed saver. They are all self fertile and will not cross so you can grow as many different varieties as you like without having to think about cross pollination or isolation. They also produce seeds in the same season that they are planted and so only need your space and attention for a short time.

Peas

Plant round peas, which are frost hardy, in winter and wrinkled peas in the spring. Tall plants will need to be supported. Pick peas regularly to encourage flowering which will give you more peas! Once you stop harvesting, the plants will stop flowering and concentrate on going to seed. Leave the pods on the plant until they are dry and brown. Open up all the pods and throw away any peas showing signs of insect damage. Leave the peas to dry completely and then freeze them for 5 days. This will kill any weevil eggs which, if hatch in storage, will eat all your seeds. If you do not manage to freeze your seeds before you return them to the seed bank, please let us know and we will freeze them. If you are growing more than one variety do not forget to label your plants and seeds at all stages (growing, collecting, storing) so that you don't mix up your seeds.

French beans

In the Alpujarra, both dwarf and climbing french beans can be planted in the spring for a summer crop and then in July for an autumn crop. Climbing beans will need to be supported. Pick the beans when young and tender when they are most tasty. This will also encourage the plants to keep flowering and produce more beans. Once you stop harvesting, the plants will concentrate on going to seed. Leave the pods on the plants until they are brown and dry. Open up all the pods and throw away any beans showing signs of insect damage. To check that the seeds are completely dry, hit them with a hammer. If they shatter, they are dry. If they squash, leave them for a few more days. When they are dry, put them in the freezer for 5 days. This will kill any weevil

eggs, which, if hatch in storage, will eat all the seeds. Please tell us if you did not manage to freeze your seeds before you give them back to the bank.

If you are growing more than one variety, don't forget to label your plants at all stages (growing, collecting and storing) so that you don't mix up your seeds.

Tomato

Most modern varieties of tomatoes have a fused pistil so the stamens are enclosed inside the flower. Tomatoes are self fertile. You will have no trouble saving pure seeds from tomatoes with this type of flower, even if you grow more than one variety. If you want to save seeds from beef tomatoes, please see the section “beginner, easy”. Tomatoes will grow all through the summer. The seeds are ready to harvest when the fruits are ripe so you can eat and save seeds from the same tomato. Please ferment your tomato seeds before you give them back to the bank (see info sheet “fermenting tomato seeds”)

BEGINNER, EASY

Everything in this section is annual and self fertile. They will all cross with other varieties of the same vegetable (ie aubergines will cross with other aubergines, cucumbers will cross with cucumbers but not with melons) so if you don't want to get involved with isolation techniques just yet, simply grow one variety of each vegetable and you won't need to worry. Seed can be saved from just one plant, although it's always better for the gene pool to save seeds from several plants.

Aubergine

If you are only growing one variety, eat the aubergines all summer and at the end of the season allow a few fruits to over-ripen. They will turn brown. The longer you leave them, the better. Seeds can then be scraped from the flesh. If you are growing a lot of varieties treat as peppers and chillies.

Peppers and chillies

Peppers and chillies are self fertile but are also readily crossed by insects. You can ensure seed purity by growing just one variety, but remember, you will be left with the choice of pepper or chilli. Flower bagging is a fairly straightforward technique that allows you to easily grow more than one variety in this group. Seeds are ready to harvest when the fruit is fully mature.

Basil

Basil flowers are very attractive to bees so cross pollinate very easily. They also rely on insects to pollinate them, so the safest, and easiest, way to save pure seeds is to grow just one variety. Keep picking off the flowers to encourage more leaf growth. When the seeds start to set, leave the stalks on the until they are dry.

Broad Beans

Broad beans rely on insects to pollinate them. Different varieties will readily cross pollinate. If you are only growing one variety, keep picking the beans until you can eat no more and then leave some pods to dry on the plants. When they are dry and brown, they are ready to store.

Runner Beans

Runner beans will cross with other runner beans but not with broad beans or french beans. Keep picking the beans while they are young and tender and when the seeds start to set, leave them on the plants until they are dry and brown. Check the pods for insects and throw away any beans with signs of damage. When the seeds are completely dry, put them in the freezer for 5 days to kill any insect eggs.

Coriander

Coriander has large seeds that are easy to save. It is prone to bolt in hot weather so it's often best to grow it in the cooler seasons. It's best not to save seeds from plants that have bolted because their offspring will show this characteristic. Coriander will cross with other varieties of coriander but will not cross with anything else. Growing just one variety at a time will ensure pure seeds.

Cucumber

Cucumbers rely on insects for pollination. They will cross with other cucumber varieties but not with melons or pumpkins. As long as you are only growing one variety at a time, you will have no problem saving pure seeds. Just let some good sized fruit go to the over ripe stage and then scrape out the seeds.

Melon

Melons will not cross with water melons but will cross with other melons. They rely on insects for pollination so as long as you are growing only one variety at a time, the seeds will be pure. The seeds are mature when the fruits are ready to eat.

Watermelon

Watermelon relies on insects for pollination. Watermelons will cross with other varieties of watermelons but will not cross with sweet melons. The seeds are mature when the fruit is ready to eat.

Beef Tomatoes

Some varieties of beef tomatoes and some older heritage varieties have a protruding stamen. These flowers can be cross pollinated by bees. As long as you are only growing one variety of tomato with a protruding stamen, you will have no trouble saving pure seeds. If you find it hard to see the flower parts, you can use a magnifying glass.

Corn

Corn is wind pollinated and all varieties will cross with each other. Better rates of pollination will occur when the corn is grown in blocks rather than rows. Growing just one variety will ensure seed purity. Corn is susceptible to inbreeding depression so it is always best to save seeds from as many plants as possible.

Radish

Radishes will cross with other radishes but not with anything else. They rely on insects to pollinate them so as long as only one variety of radish is being grown, seeds will be pure. Radishes are self-incompatible and so the insects need to bring male pollen to the flower from a different plant. For this reason it is better to keep a larger number of plants for seed saving. Just one plant will not work. You cannot eat the plants selected for seed saving but must let them flower. Leave the seed stalks on the plants until the seed pods are dry and brown.

Rocket

Rocket is prone to bolting in hot weather so best to save seeds from plants grown in the cooler season. Rocket will cross pollinate with other rockets but not with anything else. Leave the seeds stalks on the plants until they are brown and dry.

Spinach

Spinach has male and female plants and is wind pollinated. Different varieties will cross pollinate. As long as you are only growing one variety at a time you will have no trouble saving pure seeds. Leave the seed stalks on the plants until they are dry.

Okra

Okra have beautiful big flowers that are very attractive to bees. Different varieties are easily cross pollinated. Growing just one variety will ensure seed purity. Leave the fruits on the plants until they are dry and brown and then open them up and shake out the seeds. Freeze the seeds for 5 days before storage as they do harbour weevil eggs.

Courgettes

Courgettes rely on insects for pollination and will cross with other courgettes and also with pumpkins of the *cucurbita pepo* species. This can present a problem for the home seed saver. Who would want to have to choose between courgettes and pumpkins? Courgettes can be easily hand pollinated (see guide to pollinating squash) but can be safely saved if you are growing only one variety of courgette and no pumpkins from the *cucurbita pepo* group. Leave fruits selected for seed saving on the plant until it is very mature and the skin is turning to a hard rind.

Pumpkins

Pumpkins have male and female flowers and rely on insects for pollination. There are 4 main groups of pumpkins; *cucurbita pepo*, *cucurbita maxima*, *cucurbita mixta* and *cucurbita moschata*. These will cross pollinate *within* species but not *between* species so the home gardener can select one variety from each group to grow without worrying about isolation. Don't forget that courgettes belong to the family *pepo*. If you do want to grow more than one variety from the same group, hand pollination is fairly straight forward (see pollinating pumpkins guide). Allow fruits selected for seed saving to mature fully. Seeds have more viability if the fruit is stored for more time after being harvested.