

Seed saving is one of the most ancient traditions of human culture and is considered sacred in many traditions. The seed is free and alive. It is a source of life! Seed saving is easy, fun, and an honor to our ancestors and future!

## TYPES OF SEEDS

**Heirloom** – Open pollinated. Often, ancient varieties. The seeds collected will produce plants that are similar to their parent. **OFTEN THE BEST TYPE OF SEED TO SAVE**, specifically if sourced locally.

**Organic** – Grown “naturally.” Does not need chemicals to grow. Could be GMO. Best to save if organic and non-GMO.

**GMO** – Genetically modified. Sadly not bred to save seed. Will not produce a good crop and could harm environment.

**Hybrid** – Cross-pollinated. Seeds can be saved but may not have the same characteristics as parent.

**Annual** – Plant makes seed in 1 year.

**Biennial** – Plant takes 2 years to produce seed. They could be left outside in hopes that they will grow next year or brought inside for winter and replanted in spring.

**Perennial** – Plant will live multiple years and often self-seed.

## SELECTION

Pick the very best plants! The tastiest, the lettuce that bolts last, the spinach with the biggest leaves, the corn with the first and largest ears, the plants that best survive a drought or wet season, etc.

Let the seeds ripen on the plants as long as possible.

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**Peas/Beans** – Allow pods to dry on plant and harvest when brown.

**Lettuce** – Let seed ripen on plant. As they are about to mature, tie paper bag around the head of seeds. Then cut the heads and shake them into the bag.

**Corn** – Leave cobs to dry on the plant. Harvest when it when it feels firm. Rub finger on the cob to pop off the kernels (these are the seeds). If they don't come off easily, allow to dry more.

**Radish** – Harvest stalks with seed pods when the pods turn brown. Allow them to dry and then crack open the pods to get the seeds.  
\*These pods are edible and some say they are more nourishing than the radish itself.

**Spinach** – Needs both a male and female plant to produce seed, so plant a few! Save the seed from the last plants to bolt. Harvest seeds once they are brown on the plant.

**Broccoli/Cauliflower** – If planted in spring they will produce seed after they flower. They will not flower if you keep cutting the heads. When you are ready to collect seed, stop cutting them. They will eventually produce seed pods which you harvest when they have turned brown. Plant over 6 plants for best genetic base.

**Cabbage/Kohlrabi** – Do not harvest the head. Cut an X in the top of the cabbage head to make it easier for the seed stalk to grow out of. Allow seeds to dry on the plant. Varieties with a short growing season will produce seeds in fall if not

harvested. Varieties with a longer season will need to be brought inside for winter.

**Kale/Collards** – Biennial. Leave in the ground for winter and protect with hoop house if possible. They are very hardy and you can still harvest leaves until they flower. Allow the seed stalk to dry on plant.

**Rutabaga** – Biennial. Tolerates frost if mulched. Next spring allow flowers to go to seed and harvest pods when dry.

**Onion** – Biennial and worth letting flower because the flowers bring beneficial insects to garden. Harvest the onion bulb in fall and store it in a cool, dry location. Replant the bulb in early spring next year and cover with ½” of soil. The top will regrow and produce flowers and seeds in a cluster called an umbel. Allow the umbel to dry and then clip it off the plant. Dry them in a cool place for 2-3 weeks and store. There are other varieties like perennial onions and chives that will overwinter without help.

**Leeks** – Don't harvest and allow to flower. Follow the same instructions as onion. Some varieties, like King Richard, will survive over winter.

**Beet/Swiss Chard** – Biennial. Will cross-pollinate, so on try one variety at a time. Mulch heavily in winter to ensure survival, or harvest and store inside at 40 degrees in humid location for replanting in spring. Save seeds from a few plants for diversity. Cut stalks when clusters have turned brown. Store in cool, dry place for 2-3 weeks to ripen.

**Carrot** – Biennial. Will cross-pollinate so only plant one variety. Will also cross with wild carrot (Queen Anne's Lace), which is common in

Saugerties, so you might want to look up caging or hand pollinating. Wait for umbels (flower/seed clusters) to dry and then pick the two biggest ones, as they will produce the best seed.

**Parsnip** – Biennial. Same as carrot, but be careful of juice from stem and leaves, as they can cause rashes. The seeds from parsnip only last a year.

**Cucumber** – Let a few cucumbers ripen until the plant dies and the cucumber is golden yellow. Cut open and pour the juice and seeds into water for a few days. Good seeds will sink and bad will float. Then rinse, spread on a paper towel or screen, and allow to dry.

**Tomato** - Separate varieties by 100 feet to prevent cross-pollination. Allow tomatoes to completely ripen on plant. Then follow same procedure as cucumbers. Fungus may form in the water, but this is actually beneficial for helping the seeds germinate, so don't worry.

**Pepper** – Allow pepper to fully ripen (usually means leaving on plant until red). Then follow same procedure as cucumber. If the peppers are hot peppers, wash your hands after touching seeds and don't touch your eyes or nose!

**Squash/Pumpkin/Melon** – Will cross-pollinate, but you may want to experiment with hybrids! Allow fruit to ripen and then let it sit for an additional 3-4 weeks to cure (harden). Then just take out the seeds, rinse them off, dry them, and store.

**Potato/Garlic** – These are more often propagated by splitting up the tubers/bulbs than by planting seeds. It is actually recommended that you DON'T grow potatoes from seed, as the offspring may be nothing like their parents.

## SEED VIABILITY

Strong, intelligent seeds can have a very long life!  
No need to buy every years!

Cucumber, Endive: **10+ Years**

Celery: **8+**

Beat, Eggplant, Melon, Squash: **6+**

Brassicas, Lettuce, Pumpkins, Spinach: **5+**

Asparagus, Carrot, Pepper, Tomato: **Up to 4**

Beans, Leek, Parsley, Pea: **3+**

Corn, Onion, Parsnip: **1**

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## SOURCES OF QUALITY SEEDS

Hudson Valley Seed Library  
[hudsonvalleyseed.org](http://hudsonvalleyseed.org)

Southern Exposure  
[southernexposure.com](http://southernexposure.com)

Turtle Tree Seed  
[turtletreeseed.org](http://turtletreeseed.org)

