



Seed Saving: The Basics of Why & How

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Step 1: Get a hold of seeds you want to save (tasty vegetable, pretty flower, useful medicine?).

- Easiest seeds to save: Tomato, Beans, Peas, Lettuce, Herbs (Cilantro, Dill, Basil)
- Harder to save: vine crops (cucumber, melon, squash, pumpkins) and biennials (carrots, beet, onion, cabbage family)
- Make sure they are open-pollinated (OP) AKA heirloom/heritage seeds. Hybrid plant seeds won't necessarily grow true if you save the seeds.
- Sources of local OP seeds:
 - Annapolis Seeds www.annapolisseed.com
 - Pumpkin Moon Seeds www.pumpkinmoonherbals.com
 - Hope Seeds www.hopeseed.com
 - Seedy Saturday events. Find out when they're happening on www.seeds.ca
 - This year's ACORN conference is hosting a Seedy Sunday event in Dartmouth on November 13. Info at: www.acornconference.org
 - Seeds of Diversity puts out an annual Seed Exchange catalogue www.seeds.ca

Step 2: Gather information about your plant. This information will help you figure out if you need to isolate the plant you want to save seeds from and when you can expect to collect your seeds.

- Find out the scientific name. If the seeds come from a seed company, they should say the name on the package.
- Is it an annual (produces seeds in one season), biennial (goes to seed after 2 seasons), or perennial (may produce seeds every season, may produce no viable seeds)?
- How does this plant get pollinated? Some examples:
 - Self-pollinated: Lettuce, Beans, Tomatoes, Peas, Peppers, Eggplant
 - Wind-pollinated: Corn, Spinach, Beets, Chard
 - Insect-pollinated: Cucumbers, Zucchini, Squash, Carrots, Cabbage, Kale, Onions

Step 3: Grow out your plant!

- Plant your seeds. Make sure you label the variety in the garden so you don't forget what's what.
- Follow isolation requirements, if necessary. Isolation can be achieved through distance (ex. 800 metres for watermelon), timing (different planting and maturity dates do varieties aren't flowering at the same time), or with physical barriers (ex. a "cage" over the whole crop or paper bag over the individual flowering tops) requiring hand pollination.

Step 4: Collect seeds.

- Choose plants whose qualities you like (extra-delicious, beauty, earlier, later, disease or pest resistance, size, productivity....). This is your opportunity to produce, over the course of many years, a plant perfectly suited to your soil, climate, and your individual likes! Take full advantage of this gift from nature by being selective. But don't forget that things change with time and qualities you may not have noticed one year can become very important the next year (such as heat or cold tolerance).

Step 5: Process seeds.

- Wet processing: Let fruit stay on plant until mature (often beyond eating stage). Ferment pulp and seed (fermentation helps control disease). Rinse, dry. For tomatoes, eggplant, tomatillos, cucumbers, melons, pumpkins.
- Dry processing: Remove dry fruit from plants, thresh to remove seeds from coverings, remove chaff. For beans, peas, flowers, lettuce, carrots, many herbs.

Step 6: Store seeds.

- In a cool and dry spot, away from light. Air-tight jars in your cool basement or garage works well.
- A freezer or fridge is a good place to store your seeds as long as they are completely dry. Dryness is more important than coolness.
- Label your seed containers to avoid future confusion. The variety name, harvest date, and any other information you'd like to remember (qualities, the origin of your seeds...)

Step 7: Share your extra seeds (if you want)!

- Check germination rate (sprout some and see what percentage are viable). It's not nice to share seeds that won't grow into anything.
- Share with friends, neighbours, members of the local garden club or community garden, local schools.
- Seedy Saturday (or Sunday...) events. Community seed swaps or seed library.
- Through Seeds of Diversity's seed exchange catalogue
- Keep that variety going! Tell it's story!

Keep in touch!

- ✓ My email address is broadforkfarm@gmail.com.
- ✓ Or "like" Broadfork Farm on Facebook (if you're into Facebook).
- ✓ We also have a website: www.broadforkfarm.com.
- ✓ I'll be at the Seeds of Diversity seed swap table for Seedy Sunday at the ACORN conference in Dartmouth on November 13.