

GROWING AND SAVING SEEDS

Seeds grown organically have superior vigour and viability. An ample supply of home-grown seed will save money and allows you to distribute spare seed to others. You can also use a generous supply for successional sowings and to broadcast as a green manure. Growing for seed is a test of the quality of your growing conditions and abilities because it requires sufficient fertility and pest & disease control for longer.

SPACE Leaving seed crops in the ground may disrupt your rotation.

So leave a few plants at the end of a bed. Support tall plants as they flower.

Biennials can be left to over-winter in the ground outside.

Mulching will feed, maintain weed control and speed up ripening.

Start crops which have a short growing season EARLY (corn/climbing beans/peppers)

TRANSPLANT specimens – either outside to minimise the space they take up

- or inside a structure for winter protection and to avoid cross-pollination.

BIODYNAMICS Sow and cultivate crops for seed on FRUIT/FIRE days.

Harvest mature seed AFTER Full Moon at the completion of that month's growth cycle.

COLLECT when the majority of the seeds are ripe, before they start to fall.

Harvest wind-blown seed (e.g. Salsify / Scorzonera) DAILY as they ripen.

Tip: To free up space for next crop, lift the whole plant with its root early, when seeds are nearly mature. Nutrients in the plant's root, leaves and stems will be recycled and diverted into ripening the seed.

PROCESSING Dry and reduce the volume of seed stuff in progressive stages.

e.g. Whole plant → Seed heads + stem → Seed + chaff → Seed + dirt → Pure seed.

Seeds are very resilient and can withstand vigorous mechanical impact.

Most can be processed by stamping with feet or by pummelling with fists.

CLEANING

1. **GRAVITY.** Agitate so that seed settles / remove lighter chaff from the top.

2. **WINNOWERING.** Blow the chaff off the seed, shake to settle and repeat.

3. Use a **SIEVE** to separate dirt which is smaller than seed.

4. **FERMENT** gel-coated seeds (e.g. Tomato) in water for 2-4 days, then rinse & dry.

STORAGE Avoid variations in moisture and temperature.

Store in cool, dry conditions such as an unheated room.

Use paper or card containers which breath (rather than sealed plastic).

STORAGE LIFE Most seed will remain viable for 5 years.

Umbellifers (apiaciae) and Alliums (amaryllidaceae) will only be viable for 1 year

e.g. Root crops, such as Parsnips, carrots and onions.

Caution: saving seed potatoes- Vegetative reproduction allows viruses to build up after 3-5 years. Save some tubers, but don't rely on them, buy in some new stock each year.

VARIETAL PURITY Save Heritage/Heirloom varieties rather than commercially available.

Some species have simple flowers which are self-pollinating (e.g. Tomato / Legumes).

Avoid cross-pollination with a related cultivar or wild relative (e.g. Brassicas).

Grow enough specimens to retain and maintain the full range of genetic characteristics.

- For most crops this means at least 12 plants. Corn needs 100 !

F¹ varieties will produce viable seed, but are more likely to deteriorate long term.