



Collecting seeds is an enjoyable and creative process. There are many different ways to do this. Below you will find some of them and some basic tips that will help you in your effort to preserve your favorite varieties!

HOW TO COLLECT OUR OWN SEED

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Collect seed from the most representative plants of the variety, the most stylish, healthy and most productive. It is helpful to mark those plants with a ribbon ◊ We try to collect seed from the largest possible number of plants of a variety (minimum 6-12 different plants) and from most production stages (beginning, middle, end of fruiting period). This way, we have a better chance to keep all the characteristics of the variety! ◊ When we sow a variety it is essential to keep aside a small amount of seed in case our cultivation is destroyed for some reason.

Tomato

We collect the tomatoes when they are very ripe • Then, we cut them horizontally and we squeeze them over a strainer, in order to collect only the seeds • We wash the seeds into the strainer with plenty of water, stirring with our hand • Then, we put the seeds in a container with water and we remove anything that floats (unsuitable seed, residues of flesh, peel, etc.) • We finally drain the seeds and spread them on cookie sheet or other non-stick surface to dry.

Summer squash, Cucumber

We choose healthy plants and we lightly mark with an X in the 2nd or 3rd fruit of each plant, with a knife • We make sure that we cut the next fruits that the plant is producing, before they become totally mature • When the marked fruits turn yellow and hard and they stop growing, we leave them for another ten days on the plant and then we harvest them • Carefully, we cut the fruit along, trying not to injure the seeds • In order to peel the seeds off from the flesh, we push the seeds with our fingers under a tap and with the help of the water, we collect them into a strainer • We wash the seeds and we remove any debris • We drain the seeds and spread them on cookie sheet or other non-stick surface to dry.

WARNING: For winter squashes we do not apply the above. We let all the fruits to rip on the plant and when we cut them for food, we can keep the seeds.

Watermelon, Melon

We choose the most beautiful and large fruits from healthy plants and we mark them carving a superficial X • We collect the fruits when they are well ripened. Melons are ripe when they are easily detached from the plant. Watermelons are ripe when the leaf and the helix at the edge of their pedicle are dry • We remove the seeds from the fruits and we wash them thoroughly to remove any debris and empty seeds • We drain the seeds and we spread them on cookie sheet or other non-stick surface to dry.

Pepper

We choose healthy plants and mark the 2nd or 3rd fruit of each plant with ribbon • We make sure we cut all the other fruits that the plant is producing, before they become totally mature • We allow the chosen fruits to ripen until they become red and shrivel • Then we open them and we distinguish the seeds with our fingers • Finally we spread them on cookie sheet or other non-stick surface to dry.

WARNING: We always wear gloves when we get seeds from chili peppers!

Eggplant

We choose healthy plants and we mark the 2nd or 3rd fruit of each plant (one fruit on each plant) with ribbon • We allow the fruit to mature completely, until it becomes yellow and hard • In addition, we make sure we cut all the other fruits that the plant is producing, before they get ripe • We collect the fruits that we have marked and we chase them lightly with a knife on three sides • We dip the marked fruits for a few seconds in water and immediately after we leave them in the sun • We repeat this process for three days • We allow the eggplants in the sun for a few more days until they soften • We then cut the fruit lengthwise in half over a strainer • In order to peel the seeds off from the flesh, we push the seeds with our fingers under a tap and with the help of the water we collect them into a strainer • We rinse the seeds and we remove any debris • Then, we put the seeds in a container with water and remove anything that floats (unsuitable seed, residues flesh, peel, etc) • We drain the seeds and spread them on cookie sheet or other non-stick surface to dry.

WARNING: If the weather, during the drying, is hot and humid, there is a possibility that the seeds will germinate and that's why we need to assist and expedite the drying process (e.g. with a fan).

Bean, Pea, Fava

We choose the most robust plants and we leave the 2nd or 3rd fruit on each plant without collecting it • we collect all the other fruits if we want • We allow the plant to dry completely • We harvest the dry fruits and we remove the seed.

Lettuce, Chicory, Endive, Carrot, Dill, Parsley, Celery, Rocket, Cabbage, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Radish

We allow the plants selected for seed to bloom and run to seed • In areas with heavy winter when it comes to vegetables that give seed the second year, we can transplant the plants and save them to "overwinter": Once we put them in a box and cover them with sand, we store them in a place safe from frost. In the early spring we plant them in their new positions to complete their cycle • When most seeds are ripe, we cut the tops of the plants and we hang them upside down in a dry place with a tray beneath to collect the fallen seeds • Later we shake the tops in order to collect the seeds that haven't fallen on their own and we sieve to collect the clean seed.

STORAGE

ALL SEEDS MUST BE DRIED IN A SHADY, WELL-VENTILATED PLACE! The large seeds would be good to stir at regular periods for better ventilation ◊ The seeds can be stored safely ONLY when they are completely dried (practically, for small, oblong seeds this means to break in half when we bend them and for large seeds to shatter and not to mash, when we hit them with a hammer) ◊ We can pack them in paper or cloth bags or glass jars. In any case, we have to protect them from rodent and insect damages ◊ It is helpful to place a label with information about the species and the seed in each pack (name of the variety, harvest date, characteristics of the plant, source of seed, etc) ◊ The seeds kept in clean, shady, cool and dry place will be preserved for 3-4 years on average. Attention is needed in some species that have a much shorter lifespan, e.g. parsley: 1 year!

Alternative Community P E L I T I

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Any financial support for our association is more than welcome!!

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