



THE YEAR-ROUND FOOD GARDEN

GROWING FOOD WITH THE FOOD GARDENING SPECIALISTS

SAVING SEED FROM THE 3 SISTERS AND TOMATOES

Beans, corn, squash and tomatoes are featured prominently on Cathy's farm. Read on for more information on why seed saving is important, things to consider when saving seed and the how-to's of saving them all, so you'll be able to grow and enjoy them again next year.

Why Save seed?

- It's a 10,000 year old tradition.
- Seeds adapt to their growing conditions.
- Preserve traits and varieties you find desirable.
- Keep seeds in the public commons.
- Preserve biodiversity; slow down genetic erosion.
- Build a more self reliant and resilient community.
- Experience abundance - there are 22,000 lettuce seeds per ounce!

Tips for Successful Seed Saving

- Know your seed – Open-pollinated seeds are best for seed savers.
- Self-pollinated crops are the easiest to save - beans, lettuce, peas, tomatoes.
- Keep records of what you plant and when.
- Watch for cross pollination – to maintain seed purity, keep plants in the same species separated or planted at different times so they won't cross.
- Population size matters- some varieties need bigger populations in order to keep genetic pool strong – corn is a good example of a variety that needs a large population.
- Observe your plants throughout the growing season – leave flowers on plants as they turn from green to brown.
- Select seed from as many healthy plants of the same variety.
- Store new clean seeds in cool, dark, dry conditions.
- If seed is stored well, it can remain viable for years - see each crop for specifics.



SAVING BEAN SEEDS

Recommended population size for home gardens:
1 plant for viable seed; 5-10 plants for variety maintenance

- Let bean pods mature on plant.
- Select brown dry pods from many plants.
- Open pods and remove seed.
- Label with variety name and date.
- Store new seed in paper envelopes or glass jars in cool, dark, dry conditions.
- Stored well, bean seeds remain viable for at least 3-4 years.

Saving True Red Cranberry Beans:



1. Vegetative growth



2. Flowers emerge



3. Pods form



4. Pods mature and dry



5. New seed

SAVING CORN SEEDS

Recommended population size for home gardens:
10 plants for viable seed; 50-120 plants for variety maintenance

- Corn is very susceptible to inbreeding depression, so plant as large a population as possible.
- Corn is wind pollinated, so plant in blocks for best pollination.
- Let corn remain on stalks until stalks and husks have turned completely brown.
- Remove ears from stalks, then remove husks so mildew doesn't develop in drying process.
- Let ears dry for at least 2 months. Protect from rodents.
- Label your seed with variety name and year it was saved.
- Remove kernels from ears.
- Store new seed in paper envelopes or glass jars in cool, dark, dry conditions.
- Stored well, corn seeds remain viable for 5 years.

Saving Dakota Black Popcorn:



1. Vegetative growth



2. Tassels form



3. Ears form, silks emerge



4. Harvested ears



5. New seed

SAVING SQUASH SEEDS

Recommended population size for home gardens:
1 plant for viable seed; 5 plants for variety maintenance

- For pure seed, make sure you only have one squash/pumpkin species growing at a time.*
- Let squash mature on plant until slightly overripe.
- Harvest healthy squash from as many plants of the same variety.
- Move squash to shade or indoors to rest for at least another month - seeds continue to mature.
- Cut open squash and remove seeds.
- Wash seeds and remove pulp.
- Label your seed with variety name and year it was saved.
- Let seeds dry for at least 7 days out of sun.
- Store new seed in paper envelopes or glass jars in cool, dark, dry conditions.
- Stored well, seed remains viable for at least 6 years.

*Squash and pumpkins are generally classified into 1 genus and 4 species. You can grow only one of each species at a time or stagger the flowering time if you want to avoid cross pollination.

- *Curcubita argyosperma* (formerly 'mixta') – squash and gourds
- *Cucurbita maxima* – winter squash and pumpkins
- *Cucurbita moschata* – winter squash and pumpkins
- *Cucurbita pepo* – summer squash, winter squash, pumpkins and gourds

Saving Red Kuri squash:



1. Vegetative growth



2. Plants flower, then set fruit



3. Fruit rests; seed matures



4. Seeds removed



5. New seeds drying

SAVING TOMATO SEEDS

Recommended population size for home gardens:
1 plant for viable seed; 5-10 plants for variety maintenance

- Let tomatoes mature on the vine.
- When slightly overripe, harvest healthy tomatoes from as many plants of that variety.
- Cut tomatoes in half and squeeze pulp into jar or bowl.
- Add a small amount of water if tomatoes don't have a lot of their own juice.
- Let ferment for 24 hours to 4 days - mold may develop on the top of the liquid - mold breaks down the gelatinous coat that prevents tomato seed from sprouting while it is still inside the tomato. It also kills certain seedborne bacteria. Jar or bowl can be covered with cheesecloth, but solution must have air.
- After fermentation period, pour off mold and floating seeds; viable seed sinks to the bottom during the fermentation process.
- Wash remaining seeds in strainer.
- Label your seed with variety name and year it was saved.
- Let seeds dry in one layer on a plate for 4 weeks out of the sun.
- Store new seed in paper envelopes or glass jars in cool, dark, dry conditions.
- Stored well, seed remains viable for at least 5 years.

Saving Tomato seed:



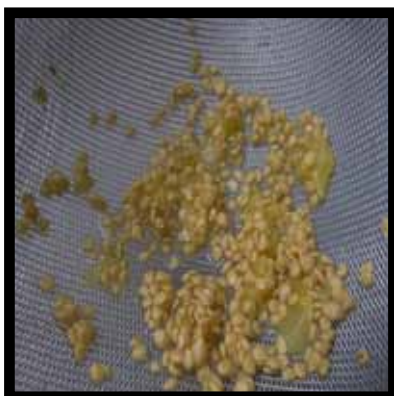
1. Vegetative growth; fruit



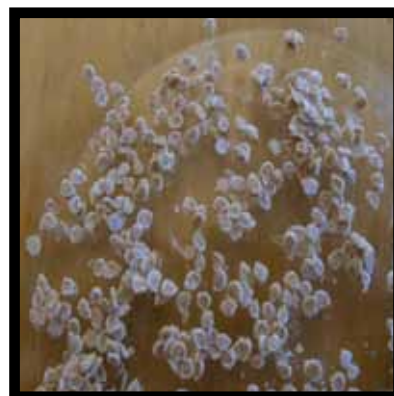
2. Tomatoes cut in half



3. Pulp; seeds ferment



4. Viable seeds washed



5. New seeds drying