

SEED SAVING RESOURCE GUIDE

YUKON ENERGY, MINES & RESOURCES LIBRARY
SEED LIBRARY



**Yukon**

Photo by Carol Ann Gingras

HOW TO SAVE SEEDS

Saving seeds in the Yukon works like any other location, with the added challenge of our short growing season and cold winters. It's a good idea for beginners to save seeds from annual plants that have shorter days to maturity. Decide early in the season which plants you will save seeds from. Consider marking the plants you select with a piece of string or similar to remind you not to harvest until the seeds are ready. Allow the fruits or flowers on the selected plants to grow past the point of typical harvest. If the seeds are not mature by the time the end of the growing season comes around, you can usually uproot the whole plant, shake the root ball free of dirt, and bring the plant indoors and hang upside down in a location with good ventilation. The seeds will continue to mature on the plant, and you can harvest them when they are ready. This method is not generally necessary in southern gardens where the growing season is longer and seeds can reach maturity before the frost comes – but it has been used by local seed savers like Ingrid Wilcox and is a great way of ensuring seeds reach maturity in our short season.

In our climate, it is challenging to save seeds from biennial plants like beets, kale, and carrot (unless you overwinter the plants in an indoor location like a cellar and replant the following year).

Important note: do not save seeds from plants grown from hybrid seeds (marked hybrid, F1, or VF on the packet). Seeds from these plants will not produce plants like the parent plant, and will not grow true-to-type.

Each plant family has their own specific seed-saving needs, and we have lots of detailed books that give specific instructions for each plant - see the Resources section at the end of this guide. Here are some general guidelines to get you started:

Dry seed processing

Used for beans, peas, grains, lettuce, onions, flowers, dill, cilantro, and others. Allow these seeds to mature and become brown and dry on the plant.

The steps involved are

- harvesting (usually cutting the seed stalk off of the plant),
- threshing (separating the seed from the stalk and chaff) and
- winnowing (removing the seed from the chaff using a breeze or fan).

HOW TO SAVE SEEDS

Wet seed processing

Used for peppers, tomatillo, squash, and many fruit seeds.

These seeds are removed from the fruit, rinsed clean of debris, and dried.

A jar of water can be used to separate seeds from debris - seeds sink and debris usually floats.

Drying the seed quickly and completely after wet processing is very important.

Fermentation seed processing

Used for tomatoes and sometimes melons and cucumbers.

It allows seeds and their juices to ferment in water for a few days to break down germination inhibitors such as the gel-sack that surrounds tomato seeds.

Mix seeds with a little water and let sit. When a layer of mold has formed on top of the water and the seeds sink, the fermentation is complete. Add more water, swish it around, then decant the mold and pulp. Repeat as needed.

Drain the water from the seeds and set them out on a plate, screen, or paper towel to dry.

Once thoroughly dry, place them in a moisture-proof container.

TYPES OF SEEDS

Self-Pollinating Plants

Easy: Perfect for a first-time grower

These plants contain both male and female parts and can reproduce on their own. The pollen of a flower is able to fertilize the same flower or another on the same plant. The product of these seeds is a reliable copy of the parent plant.

Examples include:

Pea	Lettuce
Snap bean	Wheat
Sweet Pea	Tomato
Oats	Endive

Cross-pollinating plants

Advanced: For growers with some experience

These plants require some extra care from the grower. Flowers are pollinated usually by the wind or bees. To maintain seed purity, the grower must hand-pollinate the plants or isolate the plants from other species.

Examples include:

Carrot	Beets
Celery	Swiss chard
Radish	Peppers
Eggplant	Spinach

HOW TO DONATE

Seeds should be clean and labeled with the seed type, year grown, and general location where it was grown. Include as much information as you can about the variety and growing history of the seeds – we will pass it on!

For example:

Seed: Cayenne pepper “Joe’s Long Cayenne”

Year grown: 2021 season

Location: Hillcrest

Notes: prolific, kept plants inside in commercial ice cream tubs over winter, produced more in the second year.

Drop off your seeds at the EMR Library:

335-300 Main Street, Whitehorse

- 3rd Floor of the Elijah Smith Building

Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Contact us: emrlibrary@yukon.ca Ph: 867.667.3111

WE NEED YOUR SEED SAVING EXPERTISE

Remember that some of the advice in the resources below may not reflect the realities of gardening in northern climates such as the Yukon. So modify as needed to reflect our cold winters and short growing season, and check in with other local gardeners and seed savers for locally-relevant tips like the ones we shared above. If you have additional resources to recommend or have your own recommendations or advice regarding seed saving in the Yukon, please consider submitting them to the EMR Library’s Seed Library at emrlibrary@yukon.ca and we may add them to future seed saving reference guides.

SEED SAVING RESOURCES

Resources: Seed saving books at EMR Library

The seed garden : the art and practice of seed saving / by Micaela Colley and Jared Zystro

SB324.75.C64 2015

Saving vegetable seeds : harvest, clean, store, and plant seeds from your garden / by Fern Marshall Bradley

SB324.75 .B73 2014

Manual of seed saving : harvesting, storing and sowing techniques for vegetables, herbs and fruits / by Andrea Heisteringer

SB324.75.H45 2013

Saving seeds : the gardener's guide to growing and storing vegetable and flower seeds / by Mark Rogers

SB324.75.R63 1990

Seed to seed : seed saving and growing techniques for vegetable gardeners / by Susanne Ashworth

SB324.75.A8 2002

Plant breeding for the home gardener : how to create unique vegetables & flowers / by Joseph Tychonievich

SB324.7.T93 2013

Dictionary of plant breeding / by Rolf H. J. Schlegel

SB123.S32 2010

SEED SAVING RESOURCES

Resources: Online Video / webinars

Growing in the Garden. "How to save seeds: Seed saving tips and examples." YouTube video. 10:01. April 21, 2021.

<https://youtu.be/7gcWG3O4xc0>.

This short video covers a variety of information relating to seed saving including self-pollinated / open pollinated seeds, cross-pollination, which seeds to save, seed saving examples, how to save wet and dry seeds, and how to store harvested seeds.

The Curious Gardener. "The Curious Gardener Ep 15 Saving Seeds."

YouTube video. 6:04. November 26, 2013. <https://youtu.be/klAOEpISdXY>

This 6 minute video is part of the Curious Gardener series about gardening "North of 60". The Curious Gardener (Arlin McFarlane) visits backyard gardens, farms, and organic growing operations in central Yukon to discover tips and techniques to make the best of the short northern growing season. In this episode, the Curious Gardener visits Barbara Drury at Circle D Ranch to talk about saving seeds.

Mlgardener. "How to Save Seeds: Seed Saving Tutorials." YouTube video.

January 17, 2021. [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmT1H52OB8n0qd1F0qDBtTKj4NcSX4EPP)

[list=PLmT1H52OB8n0qd1F0qDBtTKj4NcSX4EPP](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmT1H52OB8n0qd1F0qDBtTKj4NcSX4EPP).

Seed saving series of 22 short videos that cover seed saving for a variety of plants including: parsley, basil, beans, dill, marigolds, cilantro, swiss chard, broccoli, lettuce, tomato, etc.

"Webinar: Seed saving for beginners." SSEHeritage Farm. YouTube video.

29:23. <https://youtu.be/ngW0eOwkolM>.

This video gets into some of the technical aspects of seed saving including the importance of seed saving, avoiding cross-pollination, methods of seed storage, and how to process seeds from a range of plants. SEHeritageFarm is the channel for Seed Savers Exchange (seedsavers.org), a non-profit organization dedicated to saving, preserving, and sharing heirloom and open-pollinated seeds and plants.

SEED SAVING RESOURCES

Resources: Online Video / webinars

Kampe, Eric. "Getting started with learning more about seed saving." MSU Extension Beginning Farmer Webinar Series, 1:27:49. February 13, 2019.

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/videos/seed-saving>.

This webinar is presented by Eric Kampe from the Ann Arbor Seed Company. It is part of Michigan State University's Beginning Farmer webinar series and program for beginning farmers interested in engaging in new agricultural enterprises.

Websites / Blogs

Gibson, Anne. "Seed Saving Part 1: The Lost Art of Seed Saving." Garden Culture Magazine, October 7, 2019.

<https://gardenculturemagazine.com/seed-saving-part-1-the-lost-art-of-seed-saving/>.

Gibson, Anne. "Seed Saving Part 2: Selecting Seeds and Controlling Pollination." Garden Culture Magazine, Nov 20, 2019.

<https://gardenculturemagazine.com/seed-saving-part-2-selecting-seeds-and-controlling-pollination/>.

Gibson, Anne. "Seed Saving Part 3: Harvesting & Processing Seeds." Garden Culture Magazine, Jan 27, 2020. <https://gardenculturemagazine.com/seed-saving-part-3-harvesting-processing-seeds/>.

Gibson, Anne. "Seed Saving Part 4: Storing And Testing." Garden Culture Magazine, Jun 1, 2020. <https://gardenculturemagazine.com/seed-saving-part-4-storing-and-testing/>

This four-part series on seed saving was originally published in Garden Culture Magazine and includes information about the background/history of seed saving, selecting seeds, controlling pollination, harvesting and processing, storing, and testing.

SEED SAVING RESOURCES

Websites/Blogs

High Mowing Organic Seeds. "Search results for seed saving." 2021.

<https://www.highmowingseeds.com/blog/search/seed+saving/>.

Blog posts by High Mowing Organic Seeds, a Vermont seed company relating to seed saving including their own company's seed growing and saving techniques. Examples and advice may be more suitable for large/commercial gardens/farms. Topics covered include easy seed saving, dry and wet seed production.

The Real Seed Collection Ltd. "Seed Saving Instructions." Real Seeds, n.d.

<https://www.realseeds.co.uk/seedsavinginfo.html>.

This seed saving resource is published by Real Seed Collection Ltd., a UK based seed company and includes a 5-page free seed saving instruction booklet.

"Tools of the Trade: Our Top 10 Seed Saving Supplies." Seed Savers Exchange (blog), September 30, 2014. <https://blog.seedsavers.org/blog/top-10-seed-saving-supplies>.

This blog post highlights and recommends various seed saving supplies. Seed Savers Exchange is a non-profit organization located in Decorah, Iowa, with a mission to conserve and promote America's culturally diverse but endangered garden and food crop heritage for future generations by collecting, growing, and sharing heirloom seeds and plants.

Disclaimer: Some of these resources may be produced or published by seed or gardening-related businesses and may be selling seed or gardening-related products/services.

Yukon Energy, Mines and Resources Library

Location: 335-300 Main Street, Whitehorse
3rd Floor of the Elijah Smith Building
Mailing address: Box 2703 (K-335), Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Contact us: emrlibrary@yukon.ca Ph: 867.667.3111
Website: <https://yukon.ca/seed-library>