

Words to Know

Open-pollinated or heirloom seeds: seeds from varieties of plants which have been grown for many successive generations and whose physical and genetic qualities are fairly stable; these seeds will be “true to type” when saved

Hybrid or “F1” seeds: seeds that are the result of cross-pollination between different varieties of plants; these seeds will not produce plants like the parent plant

Pollination: the transfer of pollen (genetic material) from the male to the female reproductive organs of plants, to produce fruit and seeds

Cross-pollination: the transfer of pollen from one variety of plant to the flower of a different variety of plant, which creates hybrid seeds that will show unpredictable results in future generations

Annual: a plant that goes through a full reproductive cycle in a single growing season

Biennial: a plant that takes two years to produce fruit and seeds



Want to learn more?

Check out these books:

- [Seed to Seed](#) by Suzanne Ashworth
- [Basic Seed Saving](#) by Bill McDorman
- [Breed Your Own Vegetable Varieties](#) by Carol Deppe
- [The Complete Guide to Saving Seeds](#) by Robert Gough and Cheryl Moore-Gough
- [Heirloom Vegetable Gardening](#) by William Woys Weaver
- [The Heirloom Life Gardener](#) by Jere and Emilee Gettle
- [The Beginner’s Guide to Growing Heirloom Vegetables](#) by Marie Iannotti

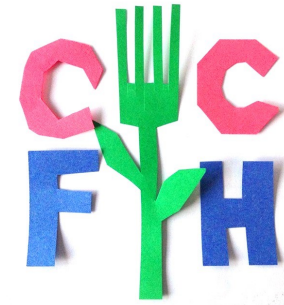
Explore these websites:

- www.seedsavers.org
- www.howtosaveseeds.com
- www.seedalliance.org

Connect with local gardening groups such as:

- Cape Cod Food Hub
- Cape Cod Master Gardeners
- Cape Cod Organic Gardeners

Or attend a workshop or lecture about gardening or seed saving at the Sturgis Library!



Cape Cod Food Hub

Introduction to Seed Saving

Saving your own seed promotes biodiversity and supports locally adapted plant varieties.

Sharing locally-saved seed strengthens a community by empowering individuals to grow their own healthy food; building connections between gardeners; and deepening residents’ connection to the land on which they live.

Choosing Your Seeds

The seeds in this collection are all from open-pollinated or heirloom varieties, meaning that seeds of successive generations will produce plants just like their parents. They are categorized by *difficulty of saving pure seed*, not difficulty of growing the plant itself.

Feel free to try growing any plants that interest you! However, if you are growing plants to save seeds, we ask that you stick to the easy plants (at least at first) to ensure that you're returning reliable seed for other library patrons.



Easy

These annual plants usually self-pollinate, which makes it easy to ensure the purity of the seeds. Examples of easy seed to save include **beans**, **peas**, **lettuce**, and **tomatoes**.



Medium

These annual plants rely on insects for pollination and may cross-pollinate with other plants, so you need to plan ahead in order to ensure pure seeds. Examples of medium seed to save include **basil**, **eggplants**, and **peppers**.



Difficult

These plants require multiple years of growing and/or they cross pollinate readily, so they are recommended for experienced seed savers only. Difficult seeds to save include **squash**, **cucumber**, **watermelon**, **kale**, **broccoli**, and **cabbage**.

Tips for saving pure, viable seed

- Grow just one variety of a plant to ensure no cross-pollination occurs; if you want to grow more than one variety, separate them by distance or with a physical barrier such as a tall flowering crop or a house.
- Check with your neighbors to see if they're gardening, too — pollinators can visit many yards in one trip!
- Only share seed that you're confident is pure (not cross-pollinated). That way, other gardeners won't have a surprise next year!
- Only save seed from your healthiest, tastiest plants so that next year's crop stays strong.
- Store seeds in consistently cool, dry, dark conditions to maintain their viability.

Why avoid cross-pollination?

Cross-pollination occurs when pollen from one variety of plant transfers to the flower of another variety of plant within the same species (for example, from a sweet pepper to a hot pepper). When this happens, the seeds that grow from that flower are no longer considered "pure" — that is, they will have unpredictable offspring that may not grow into what you were expecting!

Different plants are pollinated in different ways: some rely on bees, butterflies, beetles, or birds; others rely on wind. Check out some of the resources listed on the back of this pamphlet for more information about how to avoid cross-pollination in different types of plants.

Three Techniques for Saving Seed

Dry seed processing is for seeds that grow in pods or on the outside of the plant, for example **beans**, **peas**, and **lettuce**.

- allow the seeds/pods to dry on the plant, and collect them into a bag or bucket before they break open
- separate the seeds from the rest of the plant material (the "chaff") and allow them to dry completely before storing

Wet seed processing is for seeds that grow inside the fleshy fruit of the plant but that do *not* have a gel-like coating, for example **watermelon**, **eggplant**, and some **squash**.

- scoop the seeds out from the fruit and rinse them thoroughly in a colander
- spread the seeds on a plate or screen and allow them to dry completely before storing

Fermentation seed processing is for seeds with a gel-like coating, for example **tomato**, **cucumber**, and some **squash**.

- scoop the seeds out from the fruit and mix them with a bit of water in a small glass or plastic container with a lid
- leave the seeds in a warm spot until a layer of mold has grown on top of the water (2-6 days)
- add more water, swish it around, and remove the mold, pulp, and floating seeds by pouring them gently off the top
- drain the water and spread the remaining seeds on a plate or screen to dry thoroughly before storing