



How to Save Seeds

A Guide for More Advanced Seed Saving

So you've successfully saved some seeds and are looking to dive in to the more complicated – but perhaps more rewarding – world of plants that cross-pollinate, outbreed, or pollinate by wind or insects.

Saving Seeds of Medium Difficulty

These plants are self-sterile, cross-pollinating, or outbreeding. They may cross with other plants of their species. To save seeds from these plants, try to avoid cross-pollination by:

- Allowing only one variety in each species to flower at a time.
- Letting multiple plants of one variety flower to ensure pollination.

In our dense urban environments, some crossing can occur with our neighbors' plants, but the plants below will not cross over great distances. Many are rarely left to flower.

Lily or Onion Family

Amaryllidaceae or *Alliaceae*

These plants are biennial, which means they flower their second year, after winter. Let the seeds dry on the plant. Collect. With bulbing varieties, replant the bulb when it sprouts.

- chives
- leeks
- garlic
- onions



Goosefoot or Amaranth Family

Chenopodiaceae or *Amaranthaceae*

Beet and chard are the same species, so only let one variety flower at the same time. Spinach is *dioecious*, meaning each plant is either male or female, so let many plants flower at once for pollination. Let the seeds dry on the plant. Collect.

- amaranth
- orach
- lamb's quarters
- chard
- beets
- quinoa
- spinach

Carrot or Parsley Family

Umbelliferae or *Apiaceae*

Carrot will cross with Queen Anne's Lace, so don't save carrot seeds if Queen Anne's Lace grows nearby. Many in this family are biennials, so flowering may not occur until the second year. Let the seeds dry on the plant. Collect.

- carrot
- cilantro (coriander)
- fennel
- celery
- chervil
- parsley
- caraway
- dill
- parsnip

advanced seed saving

factsheet

Advanced Seed Saving (continued)

Saving Difficult Seeds

Most of these vegetables are outbreeding and pollinated by wind or insects. They are commonly found flowering in local neighborhoods, making isolation very difficult. Seeds that require hand pollination, tenting, and other methods to ensure purity are labeled “difficult.” These families will readily cross with nearby plants and may create strange and possibly inedible varieties.

Mustard Family

Brassicaceae

- Asian greens
- cabbage
- kale
- radish
- broccoli
- cauliflower
- kohlrabi
- turnip
- Brussels sprouts
- collards
- mustard

Exceptions that are easy: arugula, rutabaga



Gourd Family

Cucurbitaceae

- winter squash (eg. acorn)
- summer squash (eg. zucchini)
- cucumbers
- melons
- gourds
- pumpkin

Exceptions that are easy: uncommon cucurbits like gourds, mixta squash, luffa. Hand pollinate to ensure purity with this family.

Grass Family

Poaceae

- barley
- millet
- corn
- wheat
- oats
- kamut
- sorghum

Exceptions that are easier: Sorghum is easy to save because it does not cross. Depending on location, some of these other crops may be rare enough in urban yards to save without cross-pollinating. Corn, however, readily crosses with different, unseen varieties.

Other Resources:

For specific seed saving guides for each plant, visit seedsavers.org/learn.

To delve deeper into seed saving, visit our sister library's website: RichmondGrows.org

If you're saving seeds for the first time, check out our fact sheet *How to Save Seeds: An Absolute Beginners Guide*.

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