Introduction to Seed Saving

Jennie Goforth
WSU Skagit Extension
Finney Farm Seed Distro

The Practice of Saving Seeds

- Why save seed?
- What can be saved by the home gardener or farmer?
- How can seed be saved?
- When to save seed?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=th5MUyWi4Os

https://www.opensesamemovie.com/

Reasons to save seed

- Preserve genetic diversity and cultural identity of seeds
- Financial savings
- Create new varieties adapted to your microclimate
- Unique characteristics
- Bee Support

What can be saved?

Being familiar with some basic terms will help you understand what varieties may be saved easily, which require a bit more effort, and some things to avoid entirely.

- Open Pollinated
- Hybrid
- Heirloom
- Self Pollinating
- Annual
- Cross Pollinating
- Biennial
- Variety

Open Pollinated

a variety that, when allowed to cross-pollinate only with other members of the same population, produces offspring that display the characteristic traits of the variety An heirloom variety must be open-pollinated, but not all open-pollinated plants are heirlooms.

Hybrid

a plant or variety created by crossing two stable, genetically distinct parental populations; of or related to such a plant or variety; also called an F1 hybrid

Heirloom

an open-pollinated cultivar that has been grown and shared from generation to generation within a family or community An heirloom variety must be open-pollinated, but not all open-pollinated plants are heirlooms.

Self Pollinating

the transfer of pollen from an anther to a stigma of the same plant

Annual

a plant that completes its full life cycle—including germination, reproduction, and death—in one growing season

Cross Pollinating

the transfer of pollen from one plant onto the stigma or flower of another plant

Biennial

a plant that usually completes its life cycle in two growing seasons, growing vegetatively during the first season, and producing flowers and seeds and dying during the second season

Variety

a phenotypically distinct, naturally occurring population of plants within a species: commonly used as a synonym for "cultivar"

Is saving seed difficult?

Easy would include annuals requiring dry seed processing, like beans or peas

Challenging might include annuals requiring wet or fermentation processing methods

Advanced might include biennials, particularly some of the brassicas like cabbage

How to Save Seed

Everyone can do it!

Three Ways to Process Seed

Dry

Wet

Fermented

Most Seeds are Dry processed including:

Lettuce
Beans
Peas
Corn
Annual herbs
Carrot
Parsnip
Leeks
Beets
Onions
Peppers

Some Seeds are Wet Processed including:

Tomatillo
Melon
Peppers (occasionally)
Squash

Only a few seeds require Fermentation including:

Tomatoes
Cucumbers

Tomato Seed Processing

The seeds of tomatoes are easily extracted from the fruits by slicing the tomatoes along their equator to expose their seeds.

The mixture should be stirred occasionally while fermenting. The process is complete when most of the seeds have settled to the bottom of the container.

Following fermentation, the mixture is decanted, the seeds are rinsed clean, and lastly, the labeled seeds are set out to dry before storage.

Drying Seed

- Cool
- Dry
- Protected from rodents
- Decay
- Turning
- Fans
- Logbook

Threshing and Winnowing

Dry Seed often requires additional steps after drying/curing. Because this type of seed is often harvested and dried in the pod or husk, you'll need to remove it. After, you'll want to do an additional bit of curing to make sure the seeds are totally dry, and then move to storage.

Threshing Options

Curing Seed

- Cool
- Dry
- Protected from rodents
- Decay
- Turning
- Fans
- Fingernail test

Storing Seed- cool, dark, dry, insect/rodent proof

Sealed paper envelopes work great, especially for smaller quantities

With large quantities, glass jars may be used

Volume seed production often includes plastic bins or totes to hold seed or seed packets

When to Save Seed?

Annuals make their seed at the end of one growing season

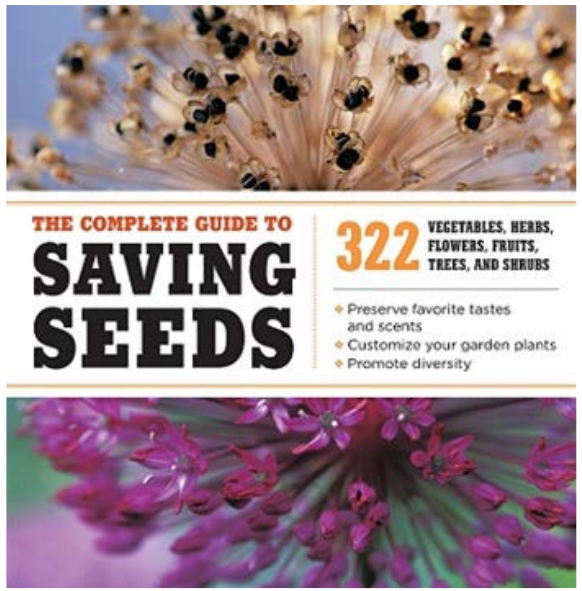
Biennials require two seasons.

- You may leave some biennials in the ground to overwinter in our area, but you may also dig up the plant and keep it in cold storage (like a root cellar or unheated greenhouse) over the coldest months and replant in the spring.

Helpful Supplies

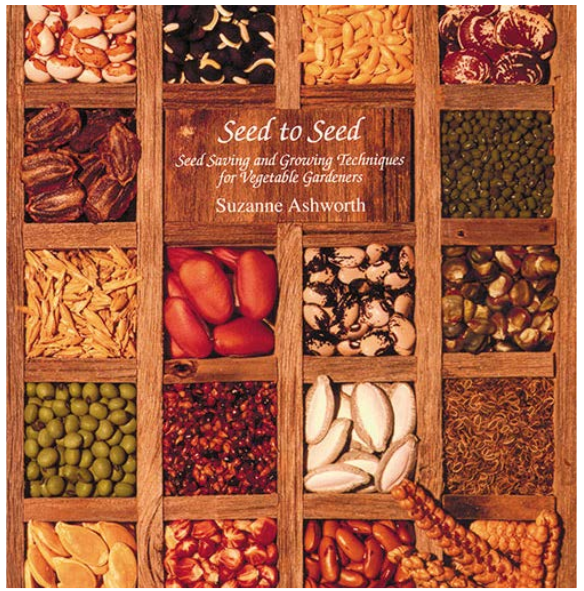
- Screens for processing such as colander, strainer, sieve, handmade screens
- Jars or small plastic tubs for wet/fermented processing
- Plates, baking sheets, window screens, tin pie pans, handmade screens for drying
- Air tight containers and/or envelopes for storing seed
- Fan
- Pruners, scissors

Additional Resources



Complete Guide To Saving Seed

Robert Gough and Cheryl Moore-Gough



Seed to Seed

Suzanne Ashworth

Websites

http://www.seedsavers.org

http://www.seedalliance.org

https://www.permies.com

https://www.seedsave.org

http://www.howtosaveseeds.com

www.facebook.com/salishseedcoop

http://finneyfarm.org

Choose what to grow with seed saving in mind!

Thanks for coming!

Have questions or interested in one of our other workshops? Contact j.bryan-goforth@wsu.edu

Visit www.finneyfarm.org to request seeds or to make a donation to support our program!