



Seed Saving

Why do it?

- It's fun and so rewarding to see your own seeds sprout next year.
- You'll select seeds that do well in your area.
- Some crops are easy to save good quality seeds from, particularly: tomatoes, runner and French beans, peas, and chillies.
- You'll have seeds you can bring to a seed swap!



Guidelines

- Only save seeds from strong, healthy plants (as disease can be carried in the seed).
- Avoid saving seeds saved from 'F1 plants' – they'll not be the same as their parents.
- Dry seeds before storing. (Dry on a plate rather than paper – as seeds can stick to paper).
- Store in dry, cool conditions. Keep in a sealed container (eg a kilner jar or Tupperware). You can prolong life by keeping them in the fridge. Silica gel can be used to help keep the seeds dry.
- Remember to label and date seed envelopes!
- Only share your seeds with others if you are confident they are good quality.

Which seeds are easiest to save?

It is easier to save good quality seeds from 'self pollinated' crops than cross pollinated crops. This is because self pollinated crops carry all the genetic information they need in one plant – so you can get healthy seeds even if you just grow one plant. With cross pollinated crops, the genetic information they need is shared between a number of plants. To save healthy seeds you often need to grow between 12 and 50 plants – not always easy in containers!



You'll also want to bear in mind how long you need to grow a crop before it seeds. Parsnips have beautiful flowers but you will need to grow them in your containers for at least 18 months before you get them.

Good choices for crops to save seeds from as a first go include:

- Tomatoes
- Runner and French beans
- Peas
- Chillies
- Lettuce (you need to give one plant lots of space in a container so it can bolt, flower and seed).
- Rocket (this is a cross pollinator but it is feasible to grow lots on plants in containers).

Of course, you can have fun saving seeds from any plant that goes to seed in your garden. Just bear in mind that it might not grow as vigorously next year. It's also best practice not share such seeds, particularly at public events like seed swaps.

How to save tomato seeds

Tomatoes also self pollinate. To save seeds, chose a few ripe tomatoes. Pulp them and add a similar quantity of water. Leave the mixture somewhere warm to ferment. After 3- 4 days, there will be mould on top – this is what you want! Rinse the mixture with lots of water, and then dry the clean seeds, on a plate in a dry, warm place. Dry them as fast as you can but don't expose them to high heat.



How to save French bean seeds

French beans self pollinate (so little risk of crossing with other varieties) and are easy to save. Simply leave a few pods on healthy looking plants to mature. The seeds will begin to bulge out in the pods. When the pod has become dry and parchment like, it's ready for harvest! Bring the pods inside – and when they've become dry and brittle, simply shell them by hand. Leave the seeds to dry further before storing.

How to save rocket seeds

Leave several plants (as many as you can) to flower and form seed pods. The pods will swell and start to turn brown. Harvest the pods before the wet weather at the end of the year. Then simply remove the seeds from the pod - do this over eg a plastic Tupperware to catch the seeds. Leave the seeds to thoroughly dry before storing.



Further Info

The Real Seeds website (www.realseeds.co.uk) has lots of helpful information on seed saving.