

Seed Saving Guide



A basic guide for successful seed saving in
Manitoba



Background

This basic home grown saving seed guide will provide you with information on how you will get started with saving seed, growing and enjoying your own seed, the tools that you will need to be an accomplished seed saver, knowledge of the space required for drying, the best time to save seed, and the reasons to save seed.

While most northern Manitoba gardeners can use these basic seed collecting tips, trial and error is your best strategy to take in early frost areas. It has been found that over time saved seeds in these areas become more acclimatized to grow better and stronger. So when you plan to start seed saving for yourself, start out with non-hybrid heirloom seeds rather than hybrid seeds. Another important thing is to be aware of different types of related seed which can, and will, cross breed with other plants of similar varieties. Cross breeding is not always a bad thing as this is how new types of beans, corn, squash can be developed. Saving seed saves money, preserves special types of plants and makes sure that you have them in the future! Much more information is available online.

Introduction

Barry and Steven, live on the east shore of Lake Winnipeg in the small isolated community of Princess Harbour. They are avid gardeners and outdoorsmen who enjoy living an earth based life-style. Over time, they have become resourceful and are always finding new ways to live in the elements and in balance with the eco-system which surrounds them. Gardening, hunting, trapping, and seed saving are just a tiny part of the whole of which they are a part. If you have any questions in regards to seed saving please contact them:

Location

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Where to Start

Knowing what you want to grow, and how it grows will help in making your seed saving easier. Most annual garden vegetable seed can be easily saved. Some of the easiest of them to save are peas, beans, corn, squash, radish, tomatoes, and peppers. This pamphlet is based on back yard gardening techniques used in gardens on the east shores of Lake Winnipeg. The frosts comes early in northern Manitoba, so some seed may not be able to mature on the plants.

As you harvest your garden over the summer, look for good healthy plants that you feel would be good parent plants for your seed. It is important to have good healthy plants from which to collect your seed.



Tools Needed for Seed Saving



Small plastic buckets or bags (paper) to collect the seeds.

A cutting tool (sharp knife, pruning shears, scissors, etc.)

Storage bags and bottles (paper and plastic bags , small sandwich or jewelry bags, and pill bottles, envelopes, will work well)

Seed drying trays, planting flats (flats, shallow cardboard boxes, pop can box bottoms)

Pen/permanent marker and labels

Some absorbent types of products such as paper towels, re-useable newspaper or cotton fabric.
A drying area (some place warm sunny and dry).
Seed to be saved!



Starting to Seed Save

After choosing the type of seed you want to harvest, either let the fruit dry out on the plant or, depending on the type of plant you are trying to collect seed, pick the fruit off the plant. Next, cut the fruit open to check if the seeds are full and look alive. It should be easy to tell. Then take the time to prepare, clean, and dry the seeds for storage. That is the basics of seed saving!



Tomatoes



Not all plants will have a long enough growing season to reproduce seeds. Plants such as carrots, beets, cabbage, and others need a much longer growing season than northern Manitoba allows. Some of plants could be made to go to seed if they were grown in a greenhouse which extends the growing season. Some just need more time than we have!



Broccoli Seed: Every year I allow a couple of my broccoli plants to flower and seed. The yellow flowers turn into green seed pods and eventually turn brown.



I fill my wheel barrow with the branches of pods, grab a fist full and twist. The seed pods burst open and little round brown seeds pop out ready for storage.

Drying is super important!

A drying area is some place warm, sunny and dry. A greenhouse works well, or a sunny window in your home. Once the seeds have completely dried (which can take several days or sometimes longer), the seeds will need to be removed from the paper towel. The seeds will be stuck to the paper and can be removed by picking them from the paper. Carefully scrape or pick the seed off with your fingers, removing any pulp that may have dried to the seeds. **Be sure to date and label all the packages of your seeds in the package.** It is also a good idea to label where you acquired the seed. A little history is a good thing to keep on your seed. Then you can keep track of how they grew for you or where they came from. The more information you can keep the better. Saving seed is a good way to create your own special garden seed just for yourself or to give away to family and friends. It is also an amazing money saving tool. When you have your seeds dried and packaged, it is good to find a nice cool dry space to keep them. You want them kept out of extreme heat, light, and humidity. Just make sure that they

are completely dry, or they will mold and rot. Store them properly in a cool dry basement or in a closet where there they can stay at a even temperature. Also, an air tight container is a handy place to store your seeds.



Collecting Seed Straight from the Plants

By the end of August, a lot of the plants that you have had growing will be starting to die off and dry. Plants such as beans, peas, and corn should be ready, or almost ready, to harvest for seed. The bean or pea pods should be dry and withered and ready to collect from the plant. Be sure that the seed is nice and dry, if there is a chance of rain, the plants can be removed from the ground and hung to dry inside. Just be sure that the seeds look matured and healthy. A good seed should be full and plump, with good form and shape.

Remove the seeds from their pods or husks if needed and they can be placed in a tray for further drying. Set the tray in a warm dry place so that any moisture in the seed will evaporate. A sunny south facing window in your home will be sufficient. You can cover the tray, or place the seed in a box with a lid, to keep them out of the direct sun for if going to be left for a long period of time. After your seeds have dried a few days and they look like they are ready for storage, you can put them away in a storage container.



healthy seeds on the top row and bad on the bottom

Small plastic bags or bottles work very well for long term storage. Also, paper envelopes and small boxes work well for storage. Make sure that they are sealed well so mice or moisture can't get in.



good dry healthy pod on top and a bad on the bottom

Collecting seeds right from fruits and veggies!

Find the fruits that are fully ripe and ready for harvest. They can even be over-ripe! Most can be cut in half and the seed scooped out and placed to dry on paper towel.

This technique can be use for cucumber, tomatoes, peppers, melons, squash, pumpkin, and many other veggies.

Beginning



Final



For potatoes:

Store your left over potatoes in a dark, moist and cool place during the winter. However, if not very cool or dark they will sprout. In the spring cut the potatoes and plant them in the soil!!!



1.



2.



3.



4.

Beans and Peas

Let them dry on the plant or hang them somewhere dry and then remove the seeds from their pods or husks. Set the tray in a warm, dry place so that any moisture in the seed will evaporate. When dry, label and package them.



Keep a list or a inventory of what type of seed
you have in storage:

Name of seed and type **Next season garden**

Corn _____

Tomato _____

Cucumber _____

Leek _____

Lettuce _____

Pea _____

Green Pepper _____

Radish _____

Spinach _____

Swiss Chard _____

Thing you would like to add _____
