

## Vegetable Seed Saving: How to Save the Best Seeds from your Garden

Gardeners tend to be a thrifty lot, and saving seeds from one year to another just makes sense. It's not only a cost effective measure, but it also ensures that you have your favorite varieties year in and year out. And you can swap seeds with your fellow gardeners to expand your garden palette!

So how do you know when a seed is ready to harvest? Here are some examples of common vegetable varieties to get you started:

- \* Pepper seeds are ripe when peppers are at their full color. These could be of the red, orange, yellow and purple variety and have started to shrivel.
- \* Tomato seeds are ready to harvest when the tomato is firm and tender. Like peppers, tomatoes must reach their full and vibrant color.
- \* Cucumber seeds are ripe when the cucumber turns fully yellow and appears to be over-ripe for eating. Harvest cucumber and continue ripening for another twenty days.
- \* Summer squash seeds are ripe when the squash is past the edible point and the rind has hardened.
- \* Peas and beans are ready when the pods become hard on the vine and the shrink against the seeds.

Before seeds can be stored, they need to be cleaned and dried. Follow this link for step-by step instructions:

[www.almanac.com/content/how-save-vegetable-seeds-seed-saving-guide](http://www.almanac.com/content/how-save-vegetable-seeds-seed-saving-guide)

Now, if you're like me and you march to the beat of a different drummer you may want to try these alternative methods of drying:

- \* I simply take a section of a pepper or tomato and place the section seed side up on a plate and place it in my refrigerator to dry. This works really well with cherry tomatoes. While this may take up a small amount of room in your fridge it can stay until Spring.
- \* Cucumbers and Summer Squash can use the same process. Just scoop out the seed pod, not too many, and dry as you would a pepper or tomato.

\* This drying method works for flower seeds as well: marigolds, zinnias....

Now that you have your seeds dried and ready to store, keeping them dry is key to their survival. Avoid using plastic containers as they will trap moisture. Instead, a simple envelope will work. The contents can easily be labeled, and stored flat. Your seeds will now last, depending on the variety, up to five years. I've had success with tomato seeds that were three years old!!!!

Seed saving not only allows gardeners the opportunity to personalize their growing options, but it also brings gardening full circle.