

EDEN SEEDS

Seed Care Information

SEED CLEANING

Though I only knew my grandfather in his retirement he was a small market gardener and my parents on their town block still saved seed for the next season. It was a simple matter then to save seed and it still is now. All that's needed is utensils from the kitchen and in some cases a fan, though most winnowing can be done by placing the seed in a bowl and blowing away the lighter husks and flowers or placing seed in a fine sieve and quickly lowering it, creating an updraught.

Kitchen sieves of different sizes can screen out larger chaff and catch seed, letting dust fall through. We use a combination of five tank screens stacked together, each with different size mesh, the largest size at the top, finest at the bottom. Also some seeds need a soaking to get the jelly coating off. Tomatoes and cucumbers crushed and soaked in a bowl or bucket of water for three days will allow the seed to wash clean. Simply rinse a few times floating off the flesh and skins leaving the seed in the bottom. Dry only in the sun. Refer to the "*Seed Savers Handbook*".

STORAGE

Seed should first be thoroughly sun dried. As three things destroy seed viability these should be reduced to the minimum. These are:-

- Heat
- Changes in temperature
- Humidity

So ensure seed is dry, particularly the fleshy ones like corn and pumpkin. When this is achieved they can be sealed in a glass jar, perhaps several varieties, each in its own paper envelope. This will then prevent further moisture getting in. Also a good idea is to place some desiccant in the jar. For this an envelope of dried powdered milk is useful. This will aid seeds to keep dry.

We all have a good cool and even temperature appliance in our kitchens. So the jar placed in the fridge will give ideal conditions and seed will still have good germination after many years.

All seed should be labelled. Its best to use the botanical name and variety name, also when growing.

KEEPING SEED PURE

We use a small nursery label to name everything in the garden. It's so easy to forget the correct name. It's easy to not know that Beetroot and Silverbeet will cross, also Broccoli and Cabbage and the many pumpkin varieties. When you see identical botanical names you can know they will cross. Botanical names are listed in Eden Seeds catalogue for this reason. Brassica oleracea will cross with other vegetables with this name but not with Brassica rapa.

For the most part to keep varieties pure only one can grown at a time. One Brassica, one Rockmelon, one Zucchini, one Cucurbita. However with some care different varieties of lettuce, peas, beans and tomatoes can be grown in the same garden without crossing. Corn pollinates in a few days so varieties separated by one month will not cross. With insect pollinated varieties a distance of 3km is recommended between varieties grown at the same time.

SELECTION

To save seed plants need to be healthy from start to finish. A failed crop or left overs is not the best way to save seed. Select some plants just for seed saving. Wind pollinated plants like corn need seed saved from at least 50 plants then seeds mixed together. Save seed from the truest, healthiest plants and eat the rest. It's a good investment to purchase the *Seed Savers Handbook* to have as a handy reference to answer each query as it comes up.

OPEN POLLINATED SEEDS

Open pollinated seeds can be saved year after year if correctly isolated and will grow true to it's parents. Hybrid and genetically engineered seed will be sterile or need to be replaced each year. A hybrid is a forced man-made crossing between two isolated forced man-made inbreds.

We are proud to offer over 800 varieties of these old traditional vegetable varieties plus herbs and flowers. There is still much more work to do. Overseas experience suggests that between 1984 and 1994 lists including open pollinated seeds reduced by two-thirds and hybrids are still replacing the old varieties. Many of those offered here are of very limited availability and by using them you encourage growers to keep producing.

OUR CHOICE

The merging and buying out of smaller seed companies continues. The result is multi-national conglomerates which aim to increase sales of hybrid and genetically engineered seed which is patented in their name only.

We believe they produce plants with inferior qualities and it leaves us with the necessity to buy seeds from the company next season. The open pollinated seeds give us self reliance and a choice for our food future. By making our choice to use open pollinated seed we secure our seed future.

ONE VARIETY EACH

There are so many growers using Eden Seeds that if they each saved seed from one vegetable variety to be distributed to others a great move forward would be made in securing their future availability and rescuing them from danger of being lost.

FUNGICIDE FREE

Our seed are not treated with fungicide. Cold wet conditions can rot seed, so plant them when the soil is warm. A healthy soil and correct conditions will mean that you do not need fungicide.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOWING SEED

You may use this as a guide though local knowledge is most useful. Gardeners are usually very willing to share their experiences and talking about gardening is a great way to meet like minded people.

SOIL TEMPERATURE

We have listed soil temperatures for sowing though I am sure not many people test soil temperature before planting. If seeds are sown as soon as the frost is cleared some seeds germinate but grow very slowly. Planting several weeks later, once it is starting to warm up, is not a great disadvantage because plants grow more quickly in warmer weather.

On the other hand sowing in trays indoors can get plants established for transplanting and give a keen gardener six to eight weeks start on the season. A second planting can be done once it is warm enough so you can have early and later harvesting.

In any case the soil temperature list may be useful. Many plants that tolerate frosty conditions do not do well if frosted when they are still tiny seedlings. Many winter vegetables are best planted in autumn so they are established before the first frost comes. It is best if you become familiar with your local conditions.

PLANTING DEPTH

A general rule is to plant seeds twice as deep as they are wide. This means that larger seeds are planted more deeply, smaller ones just under the surface. However if you have heavy soil it may be best to cover smaller seeds with sandy loam or even just

sand so they can easily emerge once they germinate. Many seeds can then be covered with cardboard or plastic at the time of sowing, to keep them

moist. Check them daily to see that they do not dry out. If they are already moist in heavy soil they will not need watering again. The cover can be taken off once they have germinated which usually takes 5 to 7 days. Remember to keep them moist once they are uncovered.

SPACING

We have made spacing suggestions. It is important to remember the size of the mature plants because if they get too bunched up they will shade each other out, grow rank and be less productive. When plants are more open air can circulate, light can enter and fungal diseases are reduced. The result is in better health and productivity.

SHADE

All plants will grow successfully in full sun. Only plants whose product is green leaf may benefit from some period of shade. They don't need great amounts of energy from the sun to form fruits. Bitterness can be reduced by reduced sunlight. Even so it is best to harvest green leaf plants when they are young thus avoiding some tendency to bitterness.

MILD CLIMATES

In milder climates in sheltered town gardens and by the sea, where conditions include no frost all plantings can be later and earlier.

HERBS

Herbs require similar conditions to vegetables. We can give no one ideal set of growth conditions. As a general guide most require a sunny position, moist and well drained, mulched, mostly fertile weed-free soil, protected from frost and wind. Herbs can be grown under glass, shade cloth and in sheltered positions throughout the year.

Alf Finch.

PLEASE NOTE

We are not a farming advisory service. For commercial advice please contact your local Agricultural Department.

We supply Traditional Open Pollinated seed for home gardeners and information supplied is done so in good faith. We take no responsibility for its accuracy. The surrounding environment differs throughout the country and each individuals personal tastes likes and dislikes differ.

For more information consult gardening books or magazines. Local knowledge is invaluable. Join your local garden club, talk to older members of the community who have had years of experience. A handy book is "YATES GARDEN GUIDE". Available at libraries and newsagencies, though you may wish to seek information on fertilizing from other publications.