

General Process of Seed Saving

(adapted from *MSU Extension Master Gardener Cabin Fever Conversation, March 2021*)

- **Choose the right plants** - Good plants to target for seed-saving are open-pollinated, annual plants. How you save seed varies from one vegetable to another, so if you'd like to experiment with saving your own seed start out with some "gateway vegetables" like tomatoes, beans, cucumbers & squash.
- **Plant enough** plants so that you have more than what you need for eating and can allow the extras to grow to full maturity for gathering seed.
- **Let plants fully mature** - Wait for the flower to bloom and then die back slightly. You generally will be able to observe the seed pod that has been left behind. When the flower heads have died and the seed pods have started to dry, that is an indication that the seeds are fully mature.
- **Harvest & dry seeds** – Harvest and separate seeds from other plant material and allow them to fully dry. Spread seeds on a screen to allow for air circulation for large seeds or on a paper towel for small seeds.
- **Store seeds** in a cool, dark, dry place. You can store seeds in various containers (e.g. plastic baggies, old jars, glass jars, etc.) Consider leaving a slight opening to allow for any residual moisture to escape. If you are storing them in a damp area (like a Michigan basement) allow seeds to fully dry and seal them tight so no additional moisture can enter.
- **Plant!** - Seeds have varying storage lengths, but generally can last a few years before experiencing significant decreases in germination rate. If stored properly, seeds can last much longer!

Easy Vegetables To Start With

Here's some helpful seed-saving videos for specific (and relatively easy) vegetables:

- Tomato - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5i28JPFzCQ>
- Beans - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCyAfyfRRCM>
- Cucumber - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjT79oHHKLO>
- Squash - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8OSYKCUT6w>

Additional Seed Saving Resources

- Crop by Crop Seed Saving Chart: <https://www.seedsavers.org/seed-saving-chart>
- Overview of how to save seeds: <https://www.seedsavers.org/how-to-save-seeds>
- Tips on hand pollinating to prevent cross pollination of similar species: <https://www.seedsavers.org/site/pdf/squash-hp.pdf>
- Short-term seed storage: <https://blog.seedsavers.org/seed-storage/>
- Montana State University Extension. *Harvesting and Saving Garden Seeds* 2020. Online resource. <https://apps.msueextension.org/montguide/guide.html?sku=MT199905AG>
- [Michigan Seed Library Network](#) connects the many emerging seed libraries through Michigan. Use their website to find seed libraries in your area and other resources to connect with seed savers throughout the state.
- **Book Recommendation** - Buttala, Lee and Shanyin Siegel. *The Seed Garden: The Art and Practice of Seed Saving*. You can purchase it here: <https://www.seedsavers.org/the-seed-garden-the-art-practice-of-seed-saving>
- **Podcast** - TrueLove Seeds. *Seeds and their people radio show* is a podcast featuring "seed stories told by the people who truly love them." <https://trueloveseeds.com/blogs/satpradio>