

Words to Know

Open-pollinated (OP) or Heirloom Seeds

Varieties which have been grown for so many successive generations that their physical and genetic qualities are fairly stable. These seeds will be “true to type” meaning conforming to the known characteristics of a known plant variety.

Hybrid Seeds (Hybrid or F1)

When cross-pollination occurs between seed varieties, the seeds saved from hybrid plants will not produce plants like their parent plant.

Pollination

The transfer of pollen from male to female reproductive organs to produce fruit and seeds.

Cross-pollination

The transfer of pollen from one variety of plant to the female flower of another variety of plant causing unpredictable results in the fruit and seeds.

Biennial

A flowering plant that takes two years to produce fruit and seeds.

Fermentation

A process that mimics natural chemical reactions by allowing seeds to break down organic barriers and prepare for germination. The fermentation process breaks down germination inhibitors and protects against certain diseases.

Plant Families

If you learn the family, genus and species of plants, you will also learn their basic seed saving needs and risks.

Families define the basic form of the flower parts of plants. All plants with the same flower (and reproductive) structure are in the same family.

Genera (singular: Genus) define more closely related plants. Crosses between genera are rare but can occur.

Species define specific botanically recognized plants with similar fruit, flowers, and leaves. Plants within one species will readily cross with each other.

Cultivars are cultivated varieties that can cross with each other but will not cross with varieties of other species. When we save seeds we usually want to maintain a cultivar or breed a new one.

*Example: Family: Gourd
[Cucurbitaceae], Genus: Cucurbita,
Species:
Cucurbita pepo,
Cultivars: Acorn
squash, Warty
gourd.*



Squash and gourd are the same species and can easily cross-pollinate, which might result in an inedible variety. That is why they are labeled “advanced.”

Support Us

The seeds you save and return are a gift to your community. To keep the seed library growing, please donate funds to the Friends of the Black Mountain Library and note it's for the Seed Library. Please contact us at

BlackMountainBlooms@gmail.com

How to Save Seeds



Black Mountain Blooms Seed Lending Library

located in the
Black Mountain Public Library
105 N. Dougherty Street,
Black Mountain, NC 28711
828-250-4756
buncombecounty.org

Tuesday: 10 AM - 8 PM
Wednesday - Friday: 10 AM - 6 PM
Saturday: 10 AM - 5 PM
Closed Sunday & Monday

Grow, Learn, & Save!

Saving and Sharing Seeds

The seeds you borrow from the Black Mountain Blooms Seed Lending Library are free, and yet they are priceless.

We hope you learn a lot as you experience the joys of gardening and seed saving. As you grow as a gardener and experience success in your garden, please consider bringing some seeds back to share the fruits of your labors with the Seed Library community.

Choosing Seeds

The seeds that you'll find in our library are all open-pollinated or heirloom varieties, meaning seeds saved from these plants will produce fruit the next season which will be the same as the parent plant. Our seeds are categorized by how difficult they are to save, not grow. Please feel free to try growing any seed that interests you. We all learn by trying new things.

When growing to save seed, try to match seed saving difficulty with your gardening expertise. Here are some guidelines for growing plants to save seed.

Easy Seeds

Easy seeds are great for beginners and grow plants that are less likely to cross-pollinate with other plants in that family.

Tip: Stick to a single plant variety or space plants far enough a part in the garden. Read the seed saving information about the plant.



Advanced Seeds

Advanced seeds grow plants that are wind, insect pollinated, or biennial and very likely to cross-pollinate with other plant varieties, resulting in a "mystery" plant. They may also take more than one season to produce seeds. *Tips: Stick to a single plant variety, stagger growing times, and use tenting or hand pollination techniques to preserve the purity of the seed. Separate similar plants by placing them a good distance apart, like in the front and back yard. It's also very important to check the botanical name to ensure which plants are related and susceptible to cross-pollination.*

Three Ways to Save Seeds

At harvest time, please consider taking some extra steps to save seeds for others to borrow and plant. By returning a portion of the seeds saved from your strongest, tastiest, and most vigorous plants, you'll help keep our seed library growing.

Dry Seed Processing

For plants with seeds that grow on the outside of the plant.

- Allow the seed to dry on the plant, and collect the seed pods before they break open (such as peas/beans).
- For plants with seeds that develop in the center of the flower, allow the plant to dry (such as sunflowers).
- When the stem holding the seed head turns brown, harvest the seeds.

Tip: Collect dry seeds under dry, warm conditions to prevent mold and reduce additional drying time.

Wet Seed Processing

- For seeds that grow inside the fleshy fruit of the plant.

- Rinse off the seeds and dry them thoroughly.
- If the seeds have a gel-like coating, use the fermentation process.

Tip: If you're not sure if your seeds have a coating, float them in a small amount of water. You'll be able to see the coating in the water.

Fermentation Seed Processing

- For seeds with a gel-like coating.
- Mix the seeds and the seed juice with a little water in a small plastic or glass container with a lid.
- Allow the seeds to ferment for 3-4 days, stir daily.
- When a layer of mold has formed on top of the water and the seeds sink, the fermentation is complete. Add more water, swish it around, and remove the mold and pulp. The good seeds will sink to the bottom, while the bad seeds will float to the top. Remove the bad seeds.
- Drain the water from the seeds and set them out on a plate, screen, or paper towel to dry thoroughly. Once the seeds are completely dry, place them in a moisture-proof container. Label and store the seeds.
- Return a few seeds in a labeled container to the Seed Library.

Tip: Use the fermentation process for seeds from tomatoes, cucumbers, some squash and some melons.

