

GLOSSARY

Open-Pollinated: Non-hybrid plants that will grow true to type if the seed is saved in the correct manner. Their genetic qualities have remained stable over many generations. Only open-pollinated seed can be donated to the Seed Sharing Library.

Hybrid: A plant that is the result of an intentional, controlled cross between two stable, inbred lines. The term "F1" or "Hybrid" will usually be on the tag or seed packet. Seed saved from hybrid plants will not grow true to type and cannot be donated to the Seed Sharing Library.

Self-Pollinated: Perfect flowers contain both male and female parts that are fertile (aka "selfers") and are the easiest plants from which to save seeds. Examples are Tomatoes, Beans, Peas, Eggplants, Peppers, Okra, and Lettuce.

Cross-Pollination: Pollen from one flower fertilizes a flower on another plant, usually carried by bees or wind (aka "crossers") Extra care must be taken when saving seeds from crossers, and they would be considered Intermediate for seed savers. Examples are Squash, Melons, Cucumbers, Broccoli, Corn, and Spinach.

Biennial: Produces vegetative growth the first season and flowers in the second season. Examples are Cabbage, Brussels Sprouts, Kale, Beets, Carrots, Celery, Onions, and Parsnips. They can also be crossers, so these are considered Advanced level for seed savers.

Heirloom: Term generally used to describe a non-commercial, open-pollinated variety kept by families, farmers, or ethnic groups over many generations

Isolation: The use of various techniques to keep your seed true to name by eliminating cross-pollination. These include blossom bagging, caging, hand-pollination, and distance.

Vernalization: A cold period required by some plants before they will set seed. This can be done by leaving plants outdoors for the winter or by lifting the plants and putting them in some sort of cold storage for a few months.

CLEANING AND STORING SEEDS

Beans, peas, and other seeds that form in pods can simply be allowed to dry on the plant before picking and shelling them. Allow the seeds to dry for a while longer after shelling so they are perfectly dry for storage.

Cucumbers, squash, melons, peppers, and eggplant can be rinsed and air-dried on a seed-drying rack or on newspaper or paper toweling.

Tomatoes have a gel-like substance surrounding them that can be removed by fermenting the seeds in a jar of water for 2-3 days. Stir daily and the viable seeds will sink to the bottom. Pour off the liquid and rinse well. Dry as above.

Seeds that are light, like lettuce or onion seeds, should be bagged in a net bag before they shatter and fall. Shake the bag to separate the seeds from the chaff. You can winnow the seeds by pouring the seeds back and forth in front of a gentle fan to remove the chaff.

Corn must be bagged before the silks emerge, hand pollinated with the correct tassels, then re-bagged.

Makes sure all seeds are thoroughly dry before storage. Store in a cool, dry place. Most properly stored seed will remain viable for several years. Consult the handout "Harvesting and Storing Seed" at <http://www.lyon.lib.mi.us/ltpl-grows/> for more information.

LTPL's Seed Library Seed-Saving Guidelines



27005 S. Milford Road • South Lyon, MI 48178
www.lyon.lib.mi.us • (248) 437-8800
Monday-Thursday 10:00 am - 9:00 pm
Friday-Saturday 10 am - 5:00 pm
Sunday 12:00 - 4:00 (Labor Day thru Memorial Day)



Lyon Township Public Library *Seed Saving Guidelines*

SAVING SEEDS

The LTPL Seed Sharing Library is a free program that lends seeds and encourages borrowers to return some seeds from their harvests to make the seed library self-sustaining. It is very important to know how to correctly save seeds so that varieties remain pure. By selecting seeds from plants that exhibit desirable qualities such as vigor, earliness, good taste, color, and disease resistance, you will eventually develop a strain that is adapted to your climate and esthetics. For successful seed saving and sharing, the varieties chosen for seed saving must be “open-pollinated” or non-hybrid. Seeds saved from hybrid plants will not be true to type and the offspring could have traits that don't resemble the original plant. Advanced seed-saving skills are fun to learn, and it is recommended that beginning seed savers master saving the easy seeds before moving on in to the more advanced seed saving methods.

This pamphlet outlines general seed-saving techniques. Please consult books, seed packets, and online resources for detailed information on individual crops. Information and links can be found at www.lyon.lib.mi.us/ltpl-grows/ LTPL has an excellent selection of books on seed saving and gardening.

Please note: If you donate seeds to the Seed Library, please do so only if you have used the proper isolation techniques. Our Seed Library will be more successful if people are able to be confident that the seeds they take will produce the expected results.

EASY SEEDS

Beginning seed savers should start with plants that will set seeds in one season and are not likely to cross-pollinate. It is still possible for cross-pollination to take place, however, so it is a good idea to separate different varieties by several feet or bag the blossoms before they open. Plants in this category include tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, beans, peas, and lettuce. Allow them to ripen completely before they are harvested, cleaned, and stored.

INTERMEDIATE SEEDS

Intermediate seeds also set seeds in one season but will readily cross pollinate with others in the same family. They require some sort of isolation technique to keep the variety pure. Cucumbers, squash, melons require hand pollination. Okra, broccoli, spinach, and corn require isolation or caging /bagging along with hand pollination or introduced pollinators. One option is to grow only one variety each per year to avoid crosses. If your close neighbors garden, consider that as well.

ADVANCED SEEDS

Advanced seeds are from biennial plants, which means they set seed in their second year of growth. They require a period of vernalization (winter cold) that can be achieved by leaving them in place outside for the winter or lifting the plants and putting them into cold storage in a root cellar or other cool place. They will also require the use of isolation techniques if there will be other plants of that type blooming at the same time. Biennial crops include cabbage, brussels

sprouts, kale, beets, kohlrabi, onions, leeks, chard, carrots, parsnips, & collards.

ISOLATION TECHNIQUES

Bagging: Covering a blossom or seed-head to prevent cross-pollination from the outside. The bag may be made of fine netting or paper. Covered flowers still need pollination, either by hand or by introduced pollinators.

Caging: Preventing pollinators (insects & birds) from reaching flowers by use of a simple structure covered with fine netting or row cover. Single plants may be caged or whole sections of garden may be covered. One of the methods of hand pollination will have to be employed to replace the actions of pollinators. Pollinators can also be introduced into the cage. Cages only have to remain over the plant until pollination is finished and they can be removed once the fruit begins to grow.

Hand Pollination: The female flower should be taped shut the night before. As early in the morning as possible, open the blossom, remove pollen from the stamen of a male flower with a brush or swab and transfer it to the stigma of the female flower. Tie or tape the blossom closed to prevent other pollen from landing on the flower. Be sure to label your crosses below the flower so you know which fruits to save for seeds after the blossom falls off.

Isolation – Timing: Planting varieties that bloom at different times so they don't cross-pollinate. Close attention has to be paid to the variety descriptions. You can also just plant one variety of some plants, like spinach, so there won't be any other varieties with which to cross.

Isolation – Distance: Planting varieties far apart so cross-pollination is unlikely. The distance depends on the crop, and what neighbors are growing in their gardens will have to be considered too.