

# Seed Saving Workshop, Tuesday, Aug 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## WHY SAVE SEEDS?

1. Selecting seeds best suited to our environment
2. Save money
3. Learn more about plants and their life cycles
4. Food sovereignty, independence, and self-reliance (from seed companies, Monsanto, etc...)
5. Protect & enhance genetic diversity (heritage seeds, etc)
6. Protect subsistence farmers from expensive hybrid seeds

## WHICH SEEDS CAN'T YOU SAVE?

1. Hybrids will not produce offspring identical to parent

## CLASSIFICATION OF GARDEN PLANTS

1. Annual: *arugula, potato, lettuce, radish, tomatoes, pepper,*
2. Biennial: *kale, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflour, parsnip, carrot, beets, swiss chard, onion*
3. Perennials: *parsley, chives, cilantro, rhubarb,*
4. Self-pollinated: *pollination occurs within each flower, which contains both male & female parts; seeds most often true to type; don't need to save seeds from various plants to maintain genetic diversity*
5. Cross-pollinated: *pollen from one flower fertilizes another on the same plant or another plant. These require barriers (distance or physical barriers) from other pollen-exchangeable plants to ensure purity; gather seeds from various plants to ensure genetic diversity*
6. Open-pollinated: *stable varieties produced from genetically similar parents.*
7. Monoecious plants: *plants with both male & female flowers (ie. squash, cucumber, corn)*
8. Dioecious plants: *plants are either male or female (ie. spinach)*
9. Perfect flowers: *flowers that contain both stamens & pistils (male & female parts)*

## THE SEED SAVING PROCESS

### **Self-pollinating annuals (aka beginner vegetable seeds): beans, grains, lettuce, peas, peppers, tomatoes**

These seeds are easy to harvest, do not require a large number of plants to ensure genetic diversity, and often do not require isolation from other varieties.

Beans: let dry in their pods, then thrash and pick out the seeds.

Lettuce: like a dandelion seed when mature (with fluff), very few heads required for sufficient seeds, seeds remains viable for up to 4 years, may have to start indoors for seeds to mature.

Peppers: dry seeds, store in labeled container. Peppers can cross-pollinate with other varieties, so for purity, they should be separated.

Peas: allow to dry on the plant, remove, allow to further dry in the shell. Thrash and separate the seed from the pod. Entire plant can be pulled and dried upside down if rain or frost prevents drying outdoors.

Tomato: remove the pulp and seeds from a very ripe tomato, place in a bucket, and add a little water so the mixture is runny. Put a lid on the bucket and label it. After 3 days you should observe a moldy, fermented brew. The fermentation breaks down a gel that covers the seed. Seeds sink and pulp floats, so you can pour off the water and any pulp carefully while not disturbing the seeds at the bottom. Pour seeds onto a screen or through a strainer to allow any remaining water to drip off. Spread seeds out on screen and let dry. Tomatoes should be separated by 10' to ensure purity. Almost all tomatoes can be grown for seed and will not cross with nearby tomatoes. The only exception is cherry tomatoes, which are a different species that will cross-pollinate and should be isolated from other types of cherry tomatoes.

**Cross-pollinated annuals (experienced vegetable seeds): arugula, corn, cucumbers, melons, mustard, radishes, spinach, squash, arugula, chives, cilantro, red orach**

These plants are less practical for community and urban gardeners since considerable cross-pollination can occur. They must be grown in isolation from other varieties, and seeds should be saved from a number of plants to ensure genetic diversity. Arugula and radish are easier candidates for saving since they won't cross with other members of the cabbage family. For arugula, leave the plants in the ground after the first frost, then harvest pods or whole plants and bring inside to dry. Plants can be left all winter and seeds harvested in the spring. Radish seeds should be picked as soon as the pods are dry, since pods will break open and scatter seeds naturally. Red orach is also easy to save seeds from, and it won't cross with its cousin the lamb's quarters.

**Cross-pollinated biennials (expert vegetable seeds): beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage family, carrots, celeriac, mustard onions, parsnips, turnips**

These plants produce an edible crop the first year, and flowers the second year. In our climate, they need to be harvested, stored indoors, and replanted the following year. Beets and swiss chard will cross-pollinate and must be isolated from each other.

Seeds should be saved from a number of plants to ensure genetic diversity.

## RESOURCES

Seed Saving Handbook (can be downloaded & printed): <http://howtosaveseeds.com/seedsavingdetails.php>

Seed Trust: an heritage, open pollinated seed company that encourages seed saving:  
<http://www.seedstrust.com/>

International Seed Saving Institute: <http://www.seedsave.org/issi/issi.html>