Words to Know

Open-pollinated or **heirloom seed** - Varieties that have been grown for so many successive generations that their physical and genetic qualities are fairly stable. This seed will be "true to type" if correctly saved.

Hybrid seed - When cross-pollination occurs between plant varieties. Seed saved from plants grown from hybrid seed will not produce plants like the parent plant.

Pollination - The transfer of pollen from male to female reproductive organs to produce fruit and seed.

Cross-pollination - The transfer of pollen from one plant to the female flower of another plant. When cross-pollination occurs between varieties it can cause unpredictable results in the fruit and seed.

Biennial - A flowering plant that takes two years to produce seed.

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

A commitment to growing plants for seed is a gift to yourself and your family. The seeds you save and return are a gift to your community.

For More Information

Check out these books.

Seed to Seed, by Suzanne Ashworth, Seed Savers Exchange, 2002. This book, which gives information on saving all the common vegetable seeds, is essential if you're saving seeds of heirloom varieties.

Breed Your Own Vegetable Varieties, by Carol Deppe, Chelsea Green, 2000.

The Organic Seed Grower: A Farmer's Guide to Vegetable Seed Production, by John Navazio, Chelsea Green, 2012.

Organic Seed Production and Saving: The Wisdom of Plant Heritage, by Brian Connolly, Chelsea Green, 2011.

The Complete Guide to Saving Seeds: 322 Vegetables, Herbs, Fruits, Flowers, Trees, and Shrubs, by Robert Gough, Storey Publishing, 2011.

Garden Seed Inventory, Seed Savers Exchange, 2005.

The New Seed Starters' Handbook, by Nancy Bubel, Rodale Books, 1988.

Explore these websites.

http://www.seedsavers.org/
http://howtosaveseeds.com/
http://www.seedalliance.org/

Thank you to The Seed Library of Pima County Library, Davis Seed Savers Alliance, and Richmond Grows for their groundbreaking work, valuable help, generosity, and inspiration.

How to Save Seed

A Seed-Lending Program at the Round Valley Public Library

The Seed Library is a free program committed to increasing our ability to feed ourselves wholesome food. We offer seeds and education. Through the time-honored tradition of seed saving we celebrate biodiversity, nurture locally adapted, organically grown plant varieties, and foster community resilience, self-reliance, and a culture of sharing.

The Seed Library operates on the honor system. You become a member when you withdraw seeds to plant. We encourage all members to learn basic seed-saving techniques so you can return seeds to the library. That will allow us to keep the library well stocked. If you are unable to save your own seeds, please donate a packet or two of fresh, commercially grown, open-pollinated (nonhybrid, nonGMO) seeds to our library.

Located in the Round Valley Public Library
23925 Howard Street (Post Office Box 620)
Covelo, CA 95428
Phone 707.983.6736
seeds@roundvalley.org

Saving and Sharing Seed

The seeds you borrow from The Seed 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 learn and experience success in your garden, please plan to return some seeds to share the fruits of your labors with The Seed Library community.

Choosing Seeds

The seeds that you will find in our library are from open-pollinated or heirloom varieties, meaning when the seeds of successive generations are planted they will reliably produce plants just like their parents. Our seeds are categorized by how difficult they are to save, not to grow. Please feel free to try growing any seeds that interest you. When growing to save seed, please try to match the seed-saving difficulty with your gardening expertise. If you are a beginning seed saver, we ask that you save and return seeds from the easy seed category the first year.

Here are some guidelines for growing plants to save seed.

Easy seeds are great for beginners. They grow plants that are less likely to cross-pollinate. Easy seeds are marked with a green label. Examples of easy seeds include bean, pea, lettuce, and tomato. *Tip: Stick with a single variety of these plants, or separate different varieties with a taller buffer crop or distance.*

Medium seeds grow plants that may be insect pollinated and are more likely to cross-pollinate. Medium seeds are marked with a yellow label. Examples of medium seeds include basil, eggplant, and pepper. *Tip: Choose only one variety from each plant or separate similar plants a good distance apart, such as in the front and back yards.*

Advanced seeds grow plants that are insect or wind pollinated and are very likely to cross-pollinate with other plant varieties and produce seeds that will grow into a "mystery" plant. They may also be biennial. Advanced seeds are marked with a red label. Examples of advanced seeds include *Brassica* crops (cabbage, broccoli, and kale), cucumber, melon, and squash. *Tip: Stick to a single plant variety within the species, stagger growing times, and use tenting or hand-pollination techniques to preserve the purity of the seed. It's also very important to check the botanical name to determine which plants are related and susceptible to cross-pollination.*

Three Ways to Save Seed

At harvest time, please take some extra steps to save seeds for others to borrow and plant. By returning a portion of the seeds you save 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 in pods or on the outside of the plant. (Examples include bean, onion, and carrot.)

- Allow the seeds to dry on the plant, and collect the seedpods before they break open.

- For plants with seeds that develop in the center of the flower, allow the plant to dry.

- When the stem holding the seedhead turns brown, harvest the seeds. *Tip: Collect dry seeds under dry, warm conditions to prevent mold and to reduce drying time.*

Wet Seed Processing - For seeds that grow inside the fleshy fruit of the plant. (Examples include eggplant, watermelon, and some squash.)

- 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 whether 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. (Examples include tomato, cucumber, some squash, and some melon.)

- 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 4 to 6 days.

- 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 piece of glass to dry thoroughly. Once the seeds are completely dry, place them in a moisture-proof container. Label and store the seeds.

- Return a portion of your seeds in a labeled envelope to The Seed Library.