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# *Save Your Own Garden Seed*

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As a result of war garden experience, together with the price of food products, people have begun to appreciate the importance of a good home garden. Anything that tends to cheapen the production of a garden is very important. We should do everything we can to raise our living at home in the most economical way.

Very frequently a large amount of good garden seed goes to waste in our gardens. The following suggestions are made hoping to encourage the saving of home garden seed as well as give simple and practical methods for the same.

It is a good practice to encourage the junior members of the family to economize and this is one way in which they can begin this practice at home, besides the educational value to them in carrying on the practice.

## GOOD SEED

For years the importance of good field seed has been appreciated, but little attention has been paid by the average gardener to his vegetable seed.

What are good? In the first place, the variety or kind should be true to name, free of trash and weed seed, and have good viability. By viability is meant a high percentage of germination. The strain of the variety is very important.

Numerous tests by the Experiment Stations with the same variety of cabbage have shown large variations. The casual observer has undoubtedly noticed in harvesting vegetables that some plants of the same variety were much more productive than others. Where a person is selecting his own seed this opportunity will be afforded.

The writer is familiar with a case in Pittsburg county where a home

gardener has been selecting and saving Alaska pea seed for several years. The plants will average fully twice the size of the average Alaska plants, and yield records show that these plants are fully three or four times as productive as the variety usually averages.

In the past the average home gardener has not saved any seed, to say nothing of paying attention to good seed. The trucker has been selecting and saving seed to some extent in this State.

## HOME GROWN SEED PLANTED IN OKLAHOMA

According to the Seed Reporter of August 10, 1918, a publication of the United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Markets, the following represents the percentage of home-grown seeds planted in Oklahoma: Snap beans 25%, beets 34%, cabbage 10%, cantaloupes 38%, carrots 9%, cauliflower 10%, sweet corn 40%, cucumber 26%, eggplant 25%, garlic 62%, kale 50%, lettuce 19%, green peppers 42%, green peas 32%, onion 25%, Irish potatoes 48%, radish 19%, spinach 26%, squash 30%, tomatoes 34%, turnip 39%, watermelon 51%.

From the above it is seen that from the experience of others in this State the saving of home-raised seed is practicable. No doubt the truckers who plant large amounts of seed made a considerable financial saving. A few years ago the average seed bill for the home garden did not amount to very much. Since there has been a very considerable advance in the price of garden seed and, again, on account of difficulty frequently experienced in securing seed, it is important to save at least enough home-raised seed of all available kinds for home use.

## PLANT AS THE UNIT

Many people in saving seed take into consideration the seed or fruit alone. This is not only true of the amateur, but frequently true of the man who has been selecting seed for years. It is said that Livingston, one of our most successful tomato breeders, for years only considered the fruit. When he began to study the plant as well as fruit his progress was rapid.

Take into consideration the entire plant in selecting seed. A good, strong, vigorous plant that is productive is very important.

## SEED CLASSIFICATION

So far as seed production is concerned, our vegetables may be classed as annuals and biennials. That is, annuals which mature seed the first year; biennials, which require two years to produce seed. In some instances and under certain conditions, biennials from a seed production standpoint may become annuals. Take cabbage, for instance, where the seed are planted and wintered over in a cold frame. The plants may produce seed the first year.

Asparagus, which is classed as a perennial, living from year to year, produces seed each year, and from a seed-growing standpoint may be mentioned with the annual plants.

Among the annuals from which seed may be saved are asparagus, beans, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, lettuce, cantaloupes, mustard, okra, peas, pepper, pumpkin, radish, spinach, squash and tomatoes.

Among the biennials are cabbage, carrots, parsley, parsnips, rutabaga, salsify or oyster plant, and turnip.

## PRESENT CONDITION OF SEED PLANTS

As a general rule, when the harvest season begins, the cultivation and care of many home gardens ceases, and as a result grass and weeds grow and many vegetables left in the garden go to seed. Under these conditions naturally the seed saved will not be so good as where the plants have been properly cared for. However, do not overlook saving all available seed. During the winter the seed can be tested and the rate of spring seeding should be governed by the seed tests.

## HARVESTING AND STORING SEED

Seed should not be harvested until they are ripe or mature. Do not leave seed after maturity if possible, or they may mold or turn dark in color. Indication of maturity is when the pods turn yellow, or fruit, such as tomatoes, melons, etc., lose their firmness.

In case of pulpy seed, such as tomatoes and melons, let them stand in their own mashed pulp for a few days in order to separate them from their sticky coverings. A convenient method is to place the pulp in some container and stir daily until fermentation sets in and loosens the sticky covering. Wash the seed. The good seed will sink and the poor seed, pulp, etc., may be removed. Dry the seed.

Seed borne in pods may be thrashed out at your convenience. However, do not permit weevils to get into them.

Label the seeds carefully and place in envelopes, paper or cloth sacks. On account of mice and insects, the writer has made a practice of placing the packages in a tin cracker box which has a tight-fitting top.

## ASPARAGUS

Select seed from plants that are free from rust. The maturity is indicated by the outside skin turning red. Select seed from strong plants, pick out the larger seed and clean as described above.

In cleaning asparagus seed it would be well to add a little lime to the water. This will remove the skin more quickly.

## BEANS AND PEAS

Select healthy, vigorous, productive plants and mark them for seed purposes. Discard the pods which contain only one or two seeds. There are several diseases which affect beans and which live over in the seed, thus affecting the plant produced from the seed. Examine the pods before shelling for any discolored or sunken areas in the pods.

Weevils frequently do much damage to bean and pea seed. Before storing them finally, in case of small lots to be stored with other seed, fumigate with carbon bisulfid. Place the seed in a tight box and put a little carbon bisulfid in a saucer and leave in the box. This liquid, which is very inflammable, should be kept away from fire. Leave the box closed for several hours.

## CORN

Where earliness is desired, which is important in Oklahoma, select the early-maturing corn. Permit the corn to mature before harvesting. Select only well-filled ears, and see that the ears are of good type and not mixed. In case of a wormy ear, pull the husk back and remove the worm and then replace the husk over the end. The corn may be stored as mentioned above, or hung up in the barn or attic.

## CUCUMBERS, CANTALOUPES, WATERMELONS, SQUASHES, PUMPKINS

These seed are easily raised. In small lots the seed can be removed, washed two or three times, dried and stored. In larger lots they may be removed and placed in a container to ferment the pulp, as previously described.

One very material advantage of saving seed of these plants is that it enables one to select from plants that have stood the drouth and are more or less resistant to wilt, which is a very destructive disease.

## EGGPLANT, TOMATO AND PEPPER

In most cases where these plants are raised, ample opportunity is afforded for a home supply of seed. Since the fruit is the edible portion, select good speciments from vigorous, healthy, productive plants. In case of small lots, extract seed, wash and dry. In larger amounts, use the fermentation process.

## LETTUCE, MUSTARD, OKRA, RADISHES AND SPINACH

It scarcely seems necessary to comment on saving seed of these plants as it is very simple. Where the seed are not to be thrashed out immediately, but the plants stored to be thrashed later, it would be well to pull or cut the plants in the morning to prevent shattering of the seed in handling.

Spinach produces seed here the first year, and seed from the spring crop may be used for fall seeding. New Zealand spinach produces seed too late for fall planting, but will produce seed the first year that may be harvested and planted in the spring. Where the plants are left, the seed will lie dormant in the ground over winter and come up the following spring.

## BIENNIALS

The biennials, such as beets, cabbage, carrots, parsnips, parsley, rutabagas and turnips, should be stored during the winter and the plants set out in early spring for best results. One or two rows in the garden set aside for the raising of seed of these biennials would furnish sufficient seed for several families or the surplus could be sold.