

A.2 Sunshine Farms Seed Saver Guide

Sunshine Farms have been distributing this wonderful guide for years. Please see their site at www.sunshinefarms.ca

Sunshine Farm Seed Saver Guide

Check the Latin Name to ensure that you avoid unintentional crossing. Plants with the same Latin name may cross with each other. For Example, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale and kohlrabi, collards, brussels sprouts all belong to the same genus (Brassica) and species (oleracea) and will cross with one another.

Isolation distance is the distance plants need from other plants with the same Latin name to maintain genetic purity. (Refer to Page VI).

The minimum number of plants needed is noted in the chart. This is important to prevent in-breeding depression which may show itself in a weakened line. The larger the 'gene pool' the better chance of maintaining a healthy diversity and as much genetic information as possible.

Don't use bio engineered seed it could be sterile and/or patented. (Certified Organic ensures that it is not bio-engineered).

Annuals which produce seed in the first year are easier—such as peas and bean which are self pollinators and easy to shell when completely dry.

Biennials produce seed in the second year—such as carrots, celery, parsley, parsnip, cabbage and broccoli. These may need to be kept in a cooler, or mulched over winter.

At seed harvest, dry most seed—most seed is harvested dry—peas and beans clean easily and like radish and mustard, should be ripened in the field. The pods can be picked and cracked by rubbing in screens with gloves.

Harvest tomato seeds 'wet'—select ripe, true to form fruit. These benefit from a short fermentation process. Scrape the seeds into a bucket, mix with a little water and stir, label right away. Keep in a warm area for a couple of days; stir each day, breaking up the mass. On the third day, pour off the top and then pour the seeds which have settled to the bottom into a colander and then onto a board to dry. Cucumbers can be collected in the same manner, as long as they have completely ripened.

Squash—have four species, Cucurbita pepo, Cucurbita maxima, Cucurbita moschata and Cucurbita mixta. Cucurbita pepo includes summer squash like scallopini, zucchini, acorn, spaghetti, delicata.

Cucurbita maxima includes buttercup and hubbard. Cucurbita moschata includes butternut. Cucurbita mixta includes cushaw squash. Let the fruit completely ripen on the vine (so the skin is impenetrable to the finger nail), scrape out the seeds and stringy flesh - put the mass in a bowl and work with the hands to break it up. Seeds which sink are usually viable. Strain them in a colander, and spread on a board to dry thoroughly. Discard flat seeds; keep the well formed plump seed.

Seed saving is an ancient tradition practiced by farmers and gardeners alike. It's easy to carry on this tradition and maintain a link to our past, carry it to the future, and be connected to the Earth through one of its basic cycles, selecting, saving, planting and savoring.

Select your best plants for seed, those which are true to variety, e.g.: do not replant bean seed that does not look like the original seed you planted (save it for the soup pot). By selecting plants that perform well in our own gardens, we are selecting for an acclimatized variety that should consistently do well in our climate, weather and discrete conditions.

Plant Characteristics to look for when selecting could include: earliness, drought resistance, pest and disease resistance, vigor, colour, hardiness, flavour and productivity.

Use open pollinated varieties—those which come true to variety from seed (not from hybrids, often designated F1).

Know your plant distances or Isolation boundaries—to avoid unintentional crosses. Please refer to the attached planting guide for 'isolation' distances for different varieties.

Save from a number of plants—to keep your gene pool diverse. Please refer to the attached planting guide for 'Minimum plants needed' for different varieties.

Collect seed from your strongest plants—which are most true to the original. Eliminate any unhealthy, or misshapen plants from those you plan to harvest seed from (they will likely still make great eating!).

Use Screens to clean the seeds—selecting the screen size most suited to filter out the seeds and leave any chaff or debris. Make sure to work over a board or bowl to collect the smallest seeds.

Seed Storage—Most seeds should be stored in a cool, dry, dark, airtight environment, if these conditions are maintained, they should remain viable for several years (refer to chart). Storage in a freezer, in a moisture proof container, will prolong seed life.