Seed Saving Guide

Nutrition & Dietetics

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

By: Skye Odelehr

Information on Seed Saving:

What is Seed Saving?
‘The practice of saving various types of reproductive material and seeds from plants such as flowers, herbs, grains, vegetables, and tubers for future use.”

Why is Seed Saving important?
“Seed saving has been known to preserve genetic diversity, which is why the practice is often used to preserve plants that are on the verge of extinction, as well as heirlooms. Additionally, seed saving has also been shown to have a positive ecological impact since these plants provide food to beetles, butterflies, and bees.”

Fun Facts:

- Peppers are the easiest seed to save; tomato and squash seeds are also easily saved.
- Chickens enjoy eating spinach seeds.

Lettuce Seed Saving

I. Production

The lettuce will grow tall and begin to “bolt,” producing seeds when temperatures begin to rise. The seeding process takes about 70-80 days.



II. Harvesting

Once you start to see little dried white dandelion puffs on the stalk, the seed is ready to harvest.



1. Remove the entire flower head with scissors, and shake it over a bag or container.



2. Sort the white dandelion head from the seed.



III. Preservation

1. After sorting, lay the seeds out to dry to prevent molding.

2. Label the container, either a brown bag, seed packet or mason jar with the date and type of plant.



3. Store in a cool dry place until ready to plant. Harvested seeds last 3-4 years if preserved well.

Spinach Seed Saving

Harvest leaves with scissors.

1. Allow the plant to dry and brown before harvest. Seeds can only be collected from female plants, which have green seeds under their leaves. Males have yellow seeds.




Female on Left Male on right

2. Once spinach plants have dried out, harvest them. This usually occurs 4-6 weeks after leaves have been harvested.



3. Hang any female plants upside down that aren't completely dry after harvesting for a week or two until completely dry.

4. Harvest seeds from stalks using gloves. Catch the seeds in a brown paper bag.

5. Label the seeds and store in a cool, dry place. Properly preserved spinach seeds can be stored for 2-3 years.

References

Dana. (2012, August 25). *Seed saving 101: Spinach & lettuce seed saving*. The Druids Garden. Retrieved June 8, 2022, from https://thedruidsgarden.com/2012/08/24/seed-saving-101-spinach-lettuce-seed-saving/

MaximumYield. (2021, November 22). *What is seed saving? - definition from maximum yield*. What is Seed Saving? - Definition from Maximum Yield.

Retrieved June 8, 2022, from

https://www.maximumyield.com/definition/3663/seed-saving