

Know how to store seeds.

Seeds are happiest when they are stored in a cool, dark, and dry place. A dark closet in a cooler part of the house or a dry, cool basement are both good spaces to store seeds for a year or two. Once properly dried, seeds can also be sealed in airtight containers and stored in the refrigerator or freezer for several years. The seeds of some crops are naturally longer lived. Tomato seeds and beans can be left for many years in adequate storage conditions, while onion and carrot seeds are notoriously short-lived. Don't forget to label your seeds with the crop type, variety name, any useful notes about your seed source, date you harvested the seeds, and number of plants from which you harvested seeds.



Gardening and Seed Saving Terms

Annual: A plant that completes its full life cycle—including germination, reproduction, and death—in one growing season.

Anther: The pollen-producing part of a stamen.

Biennial: A plant that requires vernalization and usually completes its life cycle in two growing seasons, growing vegetatively during the first season, undergoing vernalization, and producing flowers and seeds and dying during the second season.

Bolt: To elongate rapidly (as a stem) prior to flowering.

Cross-pollination: The transfer of pollen from one plant onto the stigma or flower of another plant.

Cultivar: A plant or group of plants that have been bred or selected to have distinguishable, desirable traits; commonly called a variety.

F1: The first-generation offspring produced from a cross between two different populations or varieties; an abbreviation of “first filial generation.”

Filament: The hairlike stalk of a stamen that has a pollen-bearing anther at its tip.

Flower: The reproductive structure of an angiosperm.

Genetically modified organism (GMO): An organism that has had its genetic composition altered by way of molecular breeding techniques.

Germination: The process by which a seed absorbs water and swells, causing the radicle to break through the seed coat; the emergence of a young plant from a seed.

Heirloom variety: An open-pollinated cultivar that has been grown and shared from generation to generation within a family or community.

Hybrid: A plant or variety created by crossing two stable, genetically distinct parental populations; or related to such a plant or variety; also called an F1 hybrid.

Isolation: The separation of one plant or group of plants from another to prevent cross-pollination.

Natural selection: The multigenerational process by which heritable traits in a population become common because of how efficiently those traits help individuals survive and reproduce.

Open-pollinated variety: A variety that, when allowed to cross-pollinate only with other members of the same population, produces offspring that display the characteristic traits of the variety.