

Understand the difference between wet and dry seeds

The way you save seeds depends on how the plant produces them. **Wet seeds and dry seeds** require different methods for cleaning and storage.

What is the difference between wet seeds and dry seeds?

Wet seeds are those seeds that mature inside of a moist fruit such as tomatoes, watermelons, squash, and pepper. The fruit must be fully ripe or even overripe before you can collect the seeds.

Dry seeds are those seeds that mature in a dry and brittle seed head. Most seeds are dry seeds, and you can harvest them when the seed's head crumbles or snaps open with little pressure.

Wet Seeds Need Fermentation Before Drying

Seeds from wet, fleshy fruits like **tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, and melons** are surrounded by a gel coating that inhibits germination. Fermentation removes this coating and helps prevent disease in stored seeds.

How to ferment wet seeds:

- **Gather supplies:** knife, spoon, cup/jar, water, cloth, sieve (mesh strainer), coffee filter, and a small bucket if needed.
- **Scoop the seeds:** Cut the crop in half and scrape the seeds into a cup/jar. Add water halfway, or until seeds are fully covered.
- **Ferment:** Let the water and seed mixture sit at room temperature for 2–4 days with a cloth covering the cup. Stir once or twice a day to prevent mold from forming.
- **Separate viable seeds:** After 2-4 days, add some fresh water, stir, and let the contents settle. Viable seeds **sink**; pulp and bad seeds **float**. Pour off the pulp and repeat until the water is mostly clear.
- **Rinse and dry:** Pour seeds into a sieve (mesh strainer) and rinse until they no longer feel slippery. Spread them out on a coffee filter or screen and let them dry completely. This usually takes 1–2 days.

Dry Seeds Can Be Collected Once the Pods Mature

Dry seeds come from plants that naturally produce seeds in pods or flower heads. These include crops like **sunflowers, beans, corn, lettuce, and herbs**.

Example on how to save dry seeds:

- Allow seed heads or pods to dry completely on the plant.
- Harvest into a **brown paper sack** when the seed pods are dry and brittle.
- **Remove seeds:** Shake or crumble the pods to release the seeds.
- Let seeds continue to cure in the sack for another week or two to ensure they're fully dry before storing.