

# Growing Your Own Food at Home in Salisbury Series

## Pack D SAVING SEEDS



Collecting seed from your own plants is easy, cost effective and contributes to maintaining plant biodiversity. These seeds come from plants that have adapted to your local conditions and they may be more resistance to pest and diseases. You can grow more varieties than what you can buy from the supermarket.

Seeds commonly available through garden centre and supermarkets are either hybrids or open pollinated.

### HYBRIDS

Most seeds used for food crops are hybrids- a cross of two different varieties to gain specific traits from each parent that will be advantageous for the new plant. Sort after qualities suit the needs of supermarkets that transport food a long way from where it is grown, require a large quantities of food available that is stored for a while. Flavour is not top priority. You will find hybrid or F1 written on the packets to indicate a hybrid seed.

Hybrid seeds are not suitable for seed saving. Though you can plant seeds collected from hybrids but the next generation plants do not necessarily have the selected characteristics.

Hybridisation does occur in the wild haphazardly.

### OPEN POLLINATION

Are genetically diverse which allows plants to slowly adapt to the local environment conditions. These plants are pollinated by natural mechanisms such as insects, birds, wind and humans. The seeds saved from an open pollinated plant will come true when sown and grown – be just like their parents, year after year.

This is true as long as the pollen is not shared between different varieties of the same species as certain varieties can cross pollinate. An example being cabbages and cauliflowers grown close to each other that flower at the same time may cross pollinate.

Not all open pollinated varieties are heirlooms

### HEIRLOOM

Heirloom varieties are ones that have been handed down through the generations, within a family or the community. They have adapted to the local environment they have been grown in.

All heirlooms are open pollinated, but not all open pollinated are heirlooms.

### WHERE ARE THE SEEDS?

Seeds are stored in various parts of the plants. They can be found in the following locations:

Seed head - carrot, dill, fennel, lettuce, parsley, parsnip, silverbeet

Pods - beans, broccoli, cabbage, pea, mustard

Fruits - capsicums, chilli, cucumber, pumpkin, tomatoes



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## Pack D Notes 3 SAVING SEEDS



### SEED COLLECTION STAGES

Selecting which plant/s you would like to collect seed from and source non-hybrid seeds of this plant. Prepare your soil well and grow the plant/s. As the plant comes closer to flower follow the steps below to collect your own future crops.

- Select the best plants
- Collect mature seeds
- Dry the seed
- Store the seed



### SELECT THE BEST PLANTS

If you want to collect a variety that is unfamiliar to you grow numerous plants to become familiar with its characteristics. To collect seed for good future plants you will need to ensure the plants you collect from are good quality, this may mean harvesting from other plants and leaving the best one for seed collection. This plant will need to be labelled and others will need to be told not to pick from it! Watch for the best growing plant that has good disease resistance, survives periods of harsh weather and obviously is the strongest, healthiest one in your plot.

### COLLECT MATURE SEED

The seeds need to mature and may need to be left on the plant to fully develop. Pick in dry weather and after dew has gone.

- Seed heads that can scatter need to be picked progressively as they ripen
- Seeds that are in pods can be left on the plant until the pod dries.
- Fruits such as tomatoes are best picked when the fruit is ripe and turning soft. They can be squeezed out onto a paper towel. Pumpkins and capsicum seeds can be scooped out of the cavity.
- Clean the seeds of extra material, how to do this will vary according to the seed.
- For plants in wet containers such as tomatoes, cucumbers and pumpkins, scoop out the flesh into a container of water and rub them vigorously. Pour them through a sieve and run water over them to remove all the flesh. Let them dry on a plate or grease proof paper for 10 days.
- For seeds that are in a dry casing such as peas and beans or form a seed head like carrots, onion and lots of garden flowers and kitchen herbs let the seeds dry on the bush. If the weather is wet the plant can be taken out whole and hung in a dry place. Clean the chaff and stems by gently rolling then willow.

### DRY THE SEED

The seeds will need to be spaced away from each other and kept in a cool dry location. They can be laid out on a wire rack or screen away from the wind, hung in small quantities in paper bags or kept on paper towel. Generally the larger the seed the longer it will take to dry. A simple test is to bite into one of the seeds, with reasonable pressure, and if no impressions are left it is dry. Label the seeds with the variety and date collected.

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### STORE THE SEED

Make sure the seeds are not infested with weevils before storing them. This can be done by placing the dried seeds in a sealed container in the freezer for two days. Wait until the container is back to room temperature before opening it to prevent moisture condensation.

Place the seeds in a paper or zip lock plastic bag with silica gel to absorb moisture and stop them from decomposing. Make sure they are well labelled with the name and date on it.

Some seeds can be kept for a long time, whilst others are only fresh for a season. Keeping the seeds in a constant low temperature in a dark place will prolong their life.

### WHICH SEED TO START WITH

#### Easiest

basil  
bean  
coriander  
dill  
fennel  
lettuce  
nasturtium  
pea  
tomato

#### Easy

broccoli  
carrot  
calendula  
capsicum  
celery  
chilli  
marjoram  
mint  
mizuna  
parsley  
peanut  
pumpkin  
rocket  
spring onion  
sunflower  
thyme  
watermelon

### Further information

The Seed Savers' Handbook, Michel and Jude Fanton,  
Published by The Seed Saver's Network  
<http://www.seedsavers.org/>

### Sources of Seeds

Local community gardens  
Diggers Garden Club  
Nurseries

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