

# Concord Seed Lending Library

## Seed Saving Instructions

### ARUGULA

Arugula cross pollinates. Only grow one variety if you plan to save seed.

*Seed Maturity:* Arugula sets its seed in pods. When the pods are dry the seed is ready to be harvested. The pods shatter easily so be careful when cutting the plants down. Cut the stems down at the base of the plant and tie them together with string and place them pods down in a paper bag. Close the top of the bag with a rubber band and hang the bundles upside down in a dry place for a week or two.

*Seed Saving Method:* Dry

*Process:* When the pods are completely dry, shake the bag to loosen the seeds from the open pods. You can use your hands to crumble the dried seed pods to loosen any remaining seeds. You may need to screen the seeds to remove any chaff or put the seeds in a shallow pan and blow the chaff away.

*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Arugula seeds properly stored will be viable for 4 years.



### BASIL

Basil plants are pollinated by small flying insects. The different varieties will cross pollinate so you need to separate different varieties by at least 150 feet to preserve genetic purity.

*Seed Maturity:* Basil plants will bolt and go to flower fairly quickly if you don't dead head them. To save seed you need to allow the plant to fully flower and set seed. After several weeks when the flowers are brown and dry, the seeds are ready to harvest.

*Seed Saving Method:* Dry

*Process:* Cut down the dry stalks and cut off the dry flower heads. Let them dry for a few days in a warm and dry locations. Then crush the flower heads over a colander into a bowl. The seeds are tiny and you may have to collect them with a tweezers.



*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Properly stored basil seeds should be viable for up to five years.

## BEANS

Beans are selfers and usually don't cross pollinate. It is still advisable to grow different varieties as far apart as possible with other tall plants between as a buffer.

*Seed Maturity:* When you stop harvesting your beans you will see the seed get larger inside the pods. Eventually, the plant dies back and the pods will get dry and brown. The seeds are ready for harvesting when you can't dent a bean seed with your nail.



*Seed Saving Method:* Dry

*Process:* Cut down the stalks and open the pods to release the bean seeds. If the weather turns rainy, cut down the stalks and bring them indoors to keep dry.

*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Properly stored bean seeds should be viable for 3 years.

## CHIVES

Chives will cross pollinate. If you are going to save seed, plant only one variety of chives.

*Seed Maturity:* Chives plants produce lovely flowers on tall stalks. When the flowers fade and get dry the seeds are ready to harvest.

*Seed Saving Method:* Dry

*Process:* The seeds will easily crumble out the dried flowers. Cut the stalk and shake the flowers over a plate to catch the little seeds. They are ready to package without any further treatment.



*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Chive seeds are only viable for one or two years. Annual planting is advised.

## CUCUMBERS

Cucumbers can cross pollinate so in order to save genetically pure seed you can only grow one variety of cucumber.

*Seed Maturity:* The seed is mature when the cucumber is past the eating stage. The cuke will be big and the skin will turn white or yellow.

*Seed Saving Method:* Fermentation

*Process:* After harvesting the fruits cut them in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Put the seeds and their pulp into a jar and add water to cover. Leave the jar alone for a day or two until the seeds sink to the bottom. Add more water to the jar and stir to help clean the seeds. Bad seeds will float to the top. Collect the seeds at the bottom of the jar and rinse several times. Then strain and dry on paper towels, paper plates or coffee filters

*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Properly stored, cucumber seeds can remain viable for up to 10 years



## LETTUCE

Lettuce is a selfer and usually doesn't cross pollinate. It is still advisable to grow different varieties as far apart as possible with tall plants between to serve as a buffer.

*Seed Maturity:* Lettuce seeds should be mature two to three weeks after the lettuce flowers have opened and feathery, dandelion type structures have appeared.

*Seed Saving Method:* Dry

*Process:* When half the flowers on a plant have gone to seed, cut the entire top of the plant and allow it to dry upside down in an open paper bag. Small amounts of seed can be shaken daily from individual flowering heads. Rub the seed heads with your hands to remove remaining seeds. If necessary, separate seeds from chaff with screens.

*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.





*How long are the seeds viable?* Properly stored lettuce seeds should be viable for 5 years.

## **PARSLEY**

*Seed Maturity:* Parsley is a biennial which means that you can't collect seed until the second year of the plants existence. Before the first frost, cut your parsley plants down close to the ground. In the spring the plants should regrow and set seed. Parsley seed goes through three basic stages. Immediately after it finishes flowering, the seed will emerge as a light or bright green color. It will eventually take on a tan tint during the second stage, and during the final stage, it will be brown or otherwise dark in color. It is then ready to be collected.



*Seed Saving Method:* Dry

*Process:* Snip off the seed heads and shake the tiny seeds into a paper bag. The seeds need to dry out for about 10 days to two weeks before you can safely store them. Spread the seeds in a single layer on a large surface like a baking sheet and put in a warm, dry location. Turn the seeds daily to prevent them from drying unevenly.

*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Parsley seeds keep for about 3 years.

## **PEAS**

Peas are selfers and usually don't cross pollinate. It is still advisable to grow different varieties as far apart as possible with other tall plants between to serve as a buffer.

*Seed Maturity:* When you stop picking pea pods the peas continue to mature in the pod. Eventually the pods will dry up and the peas will rattle around in the pods. At this point they are ready to harvest for seed.

*Seed Saving Method:* Dry

*Process:* Cut down the stalks and open the pods to release the pea seeds. If the weather turns rainy, cut down the stalks and bring them indoors to keep dry.



*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Properly stored pea seeds should be viable for 3 years.

## PEPPERS

Hot peppers like jalapenos are likely to be insect pollinated and require 200-300 feet between varieties. Sweet peppers are generally self-pollinated.

*Seed Maturity:* Peppers need to be whatever color they are when fully ripened such as red for the seed to be mature.

*Seed Saving Method:* Wet

*Process:* Cut the peppers open and scoop out the seeds. Rinse the seeds until clean of debris and then dry on a paper plate, a coffee filter, or paper towels.

*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Pepper seeds properly stored can be viable for 3 years.



## SPINACH

Spinach is wind pollinated. If you plan to save spinach seed, only plant one variety to prevent cross pollination

*Seed Maturity:* Spinach sets seed after bolting. This means tall stalks will grow out of the plant and produce flowers. After the flowers drop off you will see clusters of seeds. The seeds will be green at first but they will eventually turn brown and dry. Then they are ready to harvest for seed.

*Seed Saving Method:* Dry

*Process:* When the seeds are dry you can harvest the whole plant and shake or thresh it over a tarp. Some screening to clean the seed may be required.

*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Properly stored spinach seeds are viable for from 3-5 years.



## SQUASH, SUMMER

Summer squash can cross pollinate. If you are going to save seeds, only plant one variety to maintain genetic purity.

*Seed Maturity:* Summer squash seeds are ready to be collected when the squash is overripe and the skin starts to shrivel and get leathery.

*Seed Saving Method:* Fermentation

*Process:* Remove the seeds and pulp from the mature squash and rinse under water until seeds are clean. A light fermentation with a little water can sometimes help in the cleaning process. Add 1 cup of water for every cup of seeds and pulp and let sit in a warm place for 2-3 days, stirring daily. Dry seeds thoroughly on paper towels, paper plates, or coffee filters.

*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Properly stored summer squash seeds can be viable for up to 4 years.



## SQUASH, WINTER

*Seed Maturity:* Winter squash seeds are ready to collect when the squash is ready for eating.

*Seed Saving Method:* Wet

*Process:* After harvesting your winter squash, allow the squash to sit for additional ripening for at least 3-6 weeks and up to several months. Cut the squash in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds and pulp. Place the seeds in a bowl of water and swish it around to loosen the seeds from the pulp. Rinse and drain when the seeds are clean. Dry on paper towel, paper plates, or coffee filters.

*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Properly stored winter squash seeds can be viable for up to 4 years.



## SUNFLOWERS

While sunflower seeds can be self-pollinating, insect (bee) pollination encourages flower production. Only plant one variety.

*Seed Maturity:* Sunflower seeds are ready to harvest when the flower head has wilted facing down and the back of the head





turns a yellow or brown color. To protect the seeds from birds, you can cover the flowers with a light fabric such as cheesecloth and a rubber band.

#### *Seed Saving Method: Dry*

*Process:* Cut off the seed heads and put them in a dry and well ventilated place to dry for up to a week. This will make the seeds hard and easy to remove. To collect the sunflower's seeds you need to first brush off all the mature disc florets from the face of the sunflower head with your fingers. With the seeds now exposed press your thumb down firmly and move it in a circular motion and they will eventually come loose and start to drop out. Once you have created a gap they will start dropping out more easily.

If you are harvesting your seeds to save for future generations of sunflowers then the seeds you want to concentrate on collecting are the larger ones from around the edge. The seeds in the center tend to be smaller and would not have such a good yield.  
*(Information provided by [sunflower.tips/harvesting](http://sunflower.tips/harvesting))*

*Storage:* Store thoroughly dry seeds in paper envelopes, not plastic bags. Store in a dry and cool place.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Properly stored, sunflower seeds should be viable for up to 5 years.

## **TOMATOES**

Tomatoes are selfers and usually don't cross pollinate. It is still advisable to grow different varieties as far apart as possible with other tall plants between to serve as buffers.

*Seed Maturity:* Tomato seeds are ready to harvest when the fruit is ready to eat. Well matured tomatoes will have viable seeds.

#### *Seed Saving Method: Fermentation*

*Process:* Mix the seeds and the seed gel with a little water in a small plastic or glass container with a lid. Allow the seeds to ferment for 4-6 days. When a layer of mold has formed on top of the water and the seeds sink, the fermentation is complete. Add more water, swish it around and remove the mold and pulp. The good seeds will sink to the bottom, while the bad seeds will float to the top. Remove the bad seeds. Drain the water from the seeds and set them out on a plate, screen, or paper towel to dry thoroughly.

*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag



into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Properly stored tomato seeds can last 5 years.



## **WATERMELON**

Melons are insect pollinated. Unless hand pollinating, only grow one variety of melon or separate different varieties by at least a ¼ mile.

*Seed Maturity:* Seeds are mature when melon is ready for eating.

*Seed Saving Method:* Wet and/or Fermentation

*Process:* Remove the seeds and pulp and rinse under water until seeds are clean. A light fermentation with a little water can sometimes help in the cleaning process. Simply add 1 cup of water for every cup of seeds and pulp and let sit in a warm place for 2-3 days, stirring daily. Dry seeds thoroughly on paper towels, paper plates, or coffee filters.

*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Melon seeds stored properly in a cool and dry place can remain viable for 4-6 years.

## **WHEAT**

*Seed Maturity:* Harvest wheat seeds just before they are completely ripe. Fully ripe wheat kernels will fall off the stalk too easily, leading to a significant loss. Slicing off the seed heads when the kernels can still be dented with your fingernail is the age-old method of measuring ripeness.

*Seed Saving Method:* Dry

*Process:* Cut down seed heads and stalks and store somewhere well ventilated to finish drying. When the kernels are fully dry and can no longer be dented, it's time to thresh out the wheat. All the wheat seeds have to be threshed out of their hulls. Bundle the wheat into a sheaf and beat it with a short length of stiff garden hose or use the tied bundle to knock the wheat against a rock, or even use your feet to crush the seed heads. Once the seeds are separated from the rest of the stalks and seed heads, you will need to winnow it to get all the chaff out. On a windy day (or with a fan), sift through all the plant material and let the lighter pieces blow away to leave the clean wheat berries behind.





Instructions for a DIY home wheat thresher from Winwinfarm.com:

<http://winwinfarm.com/2013/06/diy-bucket-thresher-for-backyard-wheat-growers/>

*Storage:* We like to package seeds in a resealable plastic bag to protect the seeds from moisture. We then put the plastic bag into a paper coin envelope to protect the seeds from light. Store your packets in a cool dry room, drawer, or closet and don't forget to label your seeds.

*How long are the seeds viable?* Wheat seeds properly stored will remain viable for several years.