

## General Seed Saving for Beginners

By Joseph Parish



Most people's gardens have either come to a close for the season or are very close to that point. This time of year, has its good points as well as the bad. We look sadly at our garden's end and we pull the last of our crop from the field, but on the other hand, there is encouragement for the next season when we harvest the seeds obtained from our wonderful plants.

If you have never saved seeds before you really should consider doing so. When selecting seeds for this purpose choose the organic varieties as the now popular GMO seeds do not reproduce at all. In addition, many people consider them to represent a certain measure of health risk.

In today's world, there are often unfounded fears that there simply are not enough seeds reserved to combat the potential food shortage crisis which looms over America and the world. If you are inclined to believe this possibility than storing up on heirloom garden seeds would allow you to rest easy in the coming months and years ahead. It is an excellent idea whether you feel a shortage of seeds is approaching or not. A great way to initially obtain a supply of seeds is to purchase some organic foods and then save the seeds from those foods.

As a beginner, there are certain seeds that are simpler to harvest and save than others. Seeds from plants such as beans and peas as well as lettuce are high on the list for those first starting out. These types of vegetables often offer the beginner the best chance of successfully obtaining useable seeds. Another added advantage to these types of seeds is that they are readily obtainable within the same season as the mother plants are grown. There is no waiting one or two years before you can utilize the seeds in your garden. Most of these simple plants are self-pollinating which makes them easier to produce.

Let's briefly discuss the above listed plants in a bit more detail. We will start out with the beans and peas. Different varieties of beans should be adequately separated from each other by at least 150 feet or even by a different crop. Bean flowers are self-pollinating and frequently occur prior to the flower opening no insect assistance such as bees is required. If you were to do some research on the commercial growers you would readily discover that most prefer the bush varieties since those kinds of plants are easily harvested by mechanical means. They have sturdy bean pods which hold up well to mechanize equipment. For the home gardener, they could consider the Pole bean varieties since they are capable of producing more beans in a much smaller space. The vines of a pole bean plant are off the ground and easier to pick by hand. The pods should be harvested when they are dry and after turning brown which is approximately six weeks after you normally pick them to eat.

Now let's consider the peas. Peas should be planted 50 feet from each other with the possibility of a different crop in between the various varieties. Although cross-pollination by insects may be possible, it isn't needed since peas are self-pollinating. Once again, the commercial breeders usually prefer the bush varieties whereas you can select the taller versions for the home garden which produce more peas. Peas also should be allowed to dry until they turn brown before being harvested.

Lettuce plant varieties should be separated by 20 feet in order to ensure purity of the crop. These plants will also produce self-pollinating flowers. Each of the flowers will produce a single seed. You will find the flowers to be grouped together in heads of 10 to 25 flowers. Allow the seed heads to dry for about 3 weeks after the start of flowering. Since the heads will ripen at different times you will find that the harvesting of a large number of seeds at one time to be virtually impossible. The seeds can be shaken from the plants on a daily basis and those that did not fall off could be rubbed with the hands to remove them. Separate the seeds from the chaff with the help of screens.