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FACT SHEET

DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE

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SEEDS AND PLANTS FOR THE GARDEN

Seeds

Purchase your vegetable seeds from dependable seedsmen - they make a business of choosing proper growing regions and techniques for providing disease-free, uniform seeds.

Saving home-grown seed is generally not recommended for the following reasons:

1. Hybrid varieties will not likely breed true.
2. Seed-borne diseases may affect the next crop.
3. Crossing among varieties may produce undesirable qualities.
4. Adequate drying or curing of seeds may be difficult in humid conditions.

There may be, under certain circumstances, some advantages in saving your own seed. These include:

1. Maintaining a variety not available commercially.
2. Perpetuating a disease resistant or locally adapted variety.
3. Saving on the cost of purchasing seeds.

Seed may be saved from self-pollinated annuals. Do not save seeds of F₁ hybrid or plants suspected of seed-borne disease problems. Some common self-pollinated annual vegetables include: lettuce, beans and peas, and tomatoes.

Saving beans and peas: Allow seed pods to turn brown on the plant. Harvest pods, dry for 1-2 weeks, shell, and then store in a cool, (below 50°F) dry environment in a paper bag.

Saving lettuce seed: Cut off seed stalks when fluffy looking, just before all the seeds are completely dried. Seeds will fall off stalk and be lost if allowed to mature on the plant. Dry the harvested seed stalk, shake seeds off, and then store in a cool, dry environment.

Saving tomato seeds: Pick fruit from desirable plants when ripe. Cut fruit and squeeze out pulp into a container. Add a little water, then let ferment 2-4 days at room temperature, stirring occasionally. When seeds settle out, pour off pulp, spread seeds thinly to dry thoroughly. Store in a cool, dry place.

Saving seeds from cross-pollinated crops is not generally recommended for the novice due to problems with selection, hand pollination, biennial habits, and genetic variability.

Seeds will remain viable for some time if stored in a cool, dry place. The list on the next page indicates the length of time you can keep seeds saved from your garden crops.

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Vegetable	Viability (in years)		
Asparagus	3	Leek	1
Bean	3	Lettuce	5
Beet	4	Muskmelon	5
Broccoli	5	Mustard	4
Brussels sprout	5	Okra	2
Cabbage	5	Onion	1
Carrot	3	Parsley	2
Cauliflower	5	Parsnip	1
Celery	5	Pea	3
Chinese cabbage	5	Pepper	4
Collard	5	Pumpkin	4
Corn salad	5	Radish	5
Cress, water	5	Rutabaga	5
Cucumber	5	Spinach	5
Eggplant	5	Squash	5
Endive	5	Sweet corn	1
Kale	5	Tomato	4
Kohlrabi	5	Turnip	5
		Watermelon	5

Buying Plants

Due to the amount of time, attention and need for controlled growing conditions; it is most convenient and generally advised to purchase initial fruit and perennial vegetable plants from reliable growers.

When buying small fruit plants and perennial crowns such as asparagus, remember:

1. Order early or buy from reliable, local outlets.
2. Select varieties that will do well in your growing conditions.
3. Dormant bareroot plants and one or two-year-old crowns are preferred. Extensive root systems are desirable.
4. Inspect plants when you receive them. Roots should be moist and have a bright, fresh appearance. Plants should be disease and insect-free.

5. Do not allow roots to shrivel and dry out. Keep roots moist and free from freezing temperatures.

6. If necessary to keep for more than a few days, place in cold storage (not freezing) or else heel in a trench of moist soil in a shaded location. Pack soil firmly against roots to eliminate any air pockets.

When buying fruit trees, remember:

1. Order early or buy from reliable local outlets.
2. Select varieties that will do well in your growing conditions.
3. Dormant, one-year-old trees are preferred. For peaches, nectarines, and apricots, a 4' tree, 1/2" in diameter, is ideal. For apples, a 4-7' vigorous one-year-old whip 3/4" in diameter is ideal. Pears, quince, plums, cherries, and apples should be one or two-year-old trees of sufficient size with good root systems.
4. Inspect trees when you receive them. Withered bark indicates that the trees have dried out too much in storage or in transit. Trees should be disease and insect-free.
5. Keep roots moist and free from freezing.
6. If trees cannot be immediately planted, they may be refrigerated in cold storage or heeled in.

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