

## Easy to Save Plants

### Bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*)

- Separate varieties by 100 feet if possible.
- Harvest pods when they turn hard, brown, and dry. If bean pods are not completely dry before the first frost, pull the plants up and dry them further indoors.
- Open pods by hand or flail large amounts. Winnow remaining chaff.

### Cosmos (*Cosmos spp.*)

- Cut seed heads as they turn brown and place in an open paper bag to dry. Shake to remove seeds.

### Lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*)

- Separate varieties by 20 feet if possible.
- Allow seed heads to dry 2-3 weeks after flowering. When half the flowers on a plant have gone to seed, cut the top of the plant and dry upside down in an open paper bag.

### Lupine (*Lupinus spp.*)

- Harvest when the pods are plump. Allow to dry completely in a shallow cardboard box and shake to remove seeds.

### Pea (*Pisum sativum*)

- Separate varieties by 10-20 feet if possible.
- Harvest pods when they turn hard, brown, and dry. If pea pods are not completely dry before the first frost, pull the plants up and dry them further indoors.
- Open pods by hand or flail large amounts. Winnow remaining chaff.

### Pepper (*Capsicum annuum*)

- Separate varieties by 50 feet if possible.
- Harvest peppers for seed when they are fully ripe and beginning to soften. If peppers are not completely mature before the first frost, pull the plants up and allow them to ripen further indoors.
- Cut around the top of the pepper, and use the stem as a handle to twist out the core. Use the tip of a knife to flick out the seeds.
- Allow seeds to air-dry on coffee filters or screens for several days.

### Poppy (*Papaver somniferum*)

- Cut seed pods after they turn light brown and place in an open paper bag to dry.
- Carefully pull the pods apart to remove the seeds.

### Tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*)

- Separate varieties by 10-50 feet if possible.
- Harvest seeds when the tomato begins to soften.
- Gently squeeze the pulp and seeds into a container with a little water and let it sit for 1-5 days in a warm place out of direct sunlight. The pulp will ferment and mold will form.
- Viable seeds will sink to the bottom and dead seeds will float. Discard the floating solids and seeds and rinse the viable seeds in a fine mesh strainer.
- Allow seeds to air-dry on coffee filters or screens for 5-7 days.



## Harder to Save Plants

These plants require more care to prevent cross-pollination.

Find more information on advanced seed-saving at [www.howtosaveseed.com/isolate.php](http://www.howtosaveseed.com/isolate.php) or consult a seed-saving book (Dewey Decimal call number 631.531).

- **Beet, Swiss chard** (*Beta vulgaris*)
- **Cabbage family** (*Brassicaceae*): broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale
- **Carrot family** (*Umbelliferae*): carrots, dill, cilantro, parsley
- **Radish** (*Raphanus sativus*)
- **Spinach** (*Spinacia oleracea*)
- **Squash family** (*Cucurbitaceae*): cucumbers, squash
- **Turnip** (*Brassica campestris*)

## Storing Seeds

Seeds kept in proper conditions may be viable for several years.

- **Cool:** Below 50 degrees F.
- **Dark:** No direct sunlight or bright artificial light. Completely dark is best.
- **Dry:** Place seeds in separate, labeled plastic bags. Place bags in air-tight glass jars.

Adapted from International Seed Saving Institute ([seedsave.org](http://seedsave.org)), Seed Savers Exchange ([seedsavers.org](http://seedsavers.org)), Vegetable Seed Saving Handbook ([howtosaveseed.com](http://howtosaveseed.com)), and *Basic Seed Saving* by Bill McDorman.

## Terms to Know

- **Pollination:** fertilization in plants
- **Self-pollination:** fertilization occurs without need for other plants, generally inside the flower before it opens
- **Cross-pollination:** pollen is exchanged by insects or wind between flowers on the same or different plants
- **Isolation:** the separation of one plant or group of plants from another to prevent cross-pollination
- **Cultivar or variety:** plants that have been bred or selected to have distinguishable, desirable traits
- **Open-pollinated:** plant varieties resulting from pollination between the same or genetically similar plants; seeds from open-pollinated varieties will produce plants like the parent plants.
- **Heirloom variety:** an open-pollinated cultivar that has been grown and shared from generation to generation within a family or community
- **Hybrids:** plant varieties resulting from pollination between genetically distinct parents; seeds from hybrid plants may be sterile or different from the parent plants
- **Chaff:** plant debris such as pods or stems
- **Threshing:** separating seeds from chaff
- **Flailing:** cracking or crushing seed pods
- **Winnowing:** using moving air to separate chaff from seeds

For questions about returning saved seeds, call 307.634.3561 or visit the third floor Ask Here desk at the Laramie County Library.

## Local Resources

### Cheyenne Botanic Gardens

710 South Lions Park Drive  
307.637.6458 | [www.botanic.org](http://www.botanic.org)

### City of Cheyenne Compost Facility

3714 Windmill Road | 307.632.5518

### Gardening with Altitude

1101 Logan Avenue | 307.514.6000

### Grant Farms Garden Center

2120 East Lincolnway | 307.635.2676

### River Bend Nursery & Stone Company

8908 Yellowstone Road | 307.638.0147

## Online Resources

### Cheyenne Garden Gossip

A blog by local gardener Barb Gorges  
[CheyenneGardenGossip.Wordpress.com](http://CheyenneGardenGossip.Wordpress.com)

### Colorado State University Extension

Yard and garden information  
[Extension.Colostate.edu/Topic-Areas/Yard-Garden](http://Extension.Colostate.edu/Topic-Areas/Yard-Garden)

### University of Wyoming Extension

Wyoming-specific information  
[UWyo.edu/BarnBackyard/Resources/](http://UWyo.edu/BarnBackyard/Resources/)

## Contact Us

### Elizabeth Thorson, Manager

Reference Services, Laramie County Library System  
307.773.7230 | [ETHorson@lclsonline.org](mailto:ETHorson@lclsonline.org)

### Laramie County Master Gardeners

1400 East College Drive, Pathfinder Building, Room 406D  
307.633.4383 | [LCMGardeners@gmail.com](mailto:LCMGardeners@gmail.com)

*The Seed Library of Laramie County is a joint project of the Laramie County Library System and the Laramie County Master Gardeners.*

# SEED-SAVING BASICS

## Get Ready

You're ready to save seeds to return to the seed library. You'll need a few supplies:

- Fine mesh strainer for rinsing seeds
- Latex gloves for handling pepper seeds
- Mason jars (or similar) for tomato seeds and seed storage
- Coffee filters, paper towels, and/or screens for drying seeds
- Paper bags and/or shallow cardboard boxes for drying and collecting seeds
- Paper envelopes or small plastic self-sealing bags for storing seeds

## Guidelines

- Save seeds from healthy plants.
- Save seeds from multiple plants of the same variety.
- Don't save seeds from hybrids.
- Make sure seeds are completely dry before packaging them.
- Bring your seeds to the third floor Ask Here desk.
- Fill out a short donation form.
- Donate cash, if you wish, to support next year's library.

**Thank you!**

