



When to collect and store seed

Harvest your own seed is fun but takes a little understanding and planning:

- Only collect seed from healthy, vigorous plants.
- The best time to harvest is mid-afternoon on a sunny day, but never after it has rained or when it is damp with dew (to avoid mould).
- Most flowering plants ripen their seeds over several weeks.
- Be sure to harvest mature ones (brown or black).
- Capules usually start to split when seeds are ripe.

How to collect seed

1. Label the seed as collected.
2. Use a bag or bowl to shake seed from small seed heads such as 4 o'clock, snapdragon, sweet william, allium, dill and coreopsis.
3. Cut lupin and delphinium stakes and place in a large paper bag to dry.
4. Collect the complete seed heads for marigold, zinnia and coneflower.
5. Collect tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini and other squash when ripe. Cut open to remove seed, rinse and place flat on a plate with dry paper towel.
6. If pods don't open when dry, gently crush pods to release the seed.
7. Exploding seed heads need checking every few days. Place a bag over them and shake – this will usually cause the ripe seed heads to explode into the bag. Alternatively, remove the seed heads on their stems as they turn brown and place in a labelled paper bag .
8. After extracting the seed, clean off any surrounding material (chaff) attached to them, as this material could cause rotting. Chaff can harbour moulds, pests and diseases.
9. Never have seed drying in a plastic bag because they will mold from the moisture.
10. Leave the seed on a flat surface until completely dry. Could take several weeks.

Storing seeds

1. Place dry seed in labelled paper packets.
2. Store in a refrigerator at 5°C (41°F) until required. Most seed will remain viable in this way for a few years.