



COLLEGE
OF THE
VIRGIN ISLANDS

Cooperative Extension Service

GARDENERS FACTSHEET NO. 23
JUNE, 1980

SOME TIPS ON SAVING VEGETABLE SEEDS FOR THE HOME GARDEN

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It is generally recommended that gardeners use good fresh seeds when planting time comes around. Buying fresh seeds from reputable dealers eliminates the problems arising from using bad or non-fertile seeds. However, there are instances when a gardener gets hold of a particularly good seed variety, usually a native variety not easily available and not carried by commercial seed dealers. This leaves him no choice but to save seeds from his present crop. Some gardeners also desire to cut the expense of buying new seeds. It is not a sound practice, but it can be done.

For those gardeners who are thinking of producing their own seeds or want to save seeds from their present crop, the following are some suggested practices.

LEARN ABOUT THE CROPS YOU ARE GROWING

It pays to know about the seeds used to start your crops. Find out if the seeds you used were hybrids. Consult seed catalogs, if available. Seeds saved from hybrid crops generally do not produce as well as the first crop. Onion, sweet corn, cabbage, tomato, and cucumber seeds are usually hybrids.

SELECT HEALTHY PLANTS

Seeds should be taken only from the most vigorous growing plants in your garden. Plants selected for seeds must be free of any damage from insects or diseases. Just like people, plants pass on their characteristics to their offspring. Seeds from healthy plants usually grow into another healthy plant.

USE ONLY MATURE FRUITS OR PODS FOR SEEDS

Fruits or pods to be used as sources of seeds should be taken from the plants when they are fully mature. Seeds from fully mature fruits germinate better and keep longer. Immature seeds from young fruits do not germinate. Again, when harvesting fruits for seed, pick only the best looking fruits or pods.

CLEAN AND DRY THE SEEDS

Seeds of vegetable crops vary in size and appearance. Some come out of the fruits already clean and dry, while seeds from crops such as tomatoes and melons are wet and coated with a gelatinous material. Here are some recommended methods for cleaning seeds.

Tomatoes, Cucumbers and Melons: Open the fruits and



place seeds in a jar. Add a little water to make a soupy mixture. Leave the jar open at room temperature and allow the mixture to ferment for 2-3 days. During fermentation, stir occasionally to separate pulp from the seeds. After 2-3 days seeds should settle to the bottom of the jar and the pulp can be poured off. Wash the seeds and lay them on an absorbent paper; an old newspaper will do. Put them in the sunlight to dry for 2 days.

Squash, Eggplants and Pepper: Open the fruits. Remove the seeds and wash. Dry them like the tomatoes.

Beans, Okra, Onions, Mustard, and Radish: Allow the pods to dry on the plant but pick them before the pods shatter and seeds fall to the ground. Complete the drying process by laying them out under the sun until the pods are hard and dry. The seeds are easily taken from the dry pods.

TREAT SEEDS WITH CHEMICALS

Disease organisms may be carried outside and inside the seeds. They do their damage when the seeds are planted. Treating seeds with chemicals minimizes problems arising from seedborn diseases as well as diseases that attack newly planted seeds. Ceresan and Arasan are usually recommended, although other fungicides can be used.

There are a number of ways of treating seeds with chemicals. The simplified way is to mix the chemicals with the seeds so the chemicals cover most surfaces of the seeds. One tablespoonful per pound of seeds is sufficient. Simply place the seeds in a jar or bag and add the chemicals. Close the container and shake. Keep shaking until seeds are covered with the

chemicals. Now they are ready to be stored.

Precautions:

- 1) All seed treatment materials are poisonous and highly toxic. Carefully mark containers holding treated seeds. Do not use the seeds for feed or food even after they have been stored for months or years.
- 2) Avoid inhaling dusts, fumes or vapors when treating.
- 3) Do treatment in well-ventilated place.
- 4) When treating seeds, use dust mask or handkerchief over your nose and mouth. Avoid getting any chemical material on your skin. Wash hands afterwards and dry skin thoroughly.

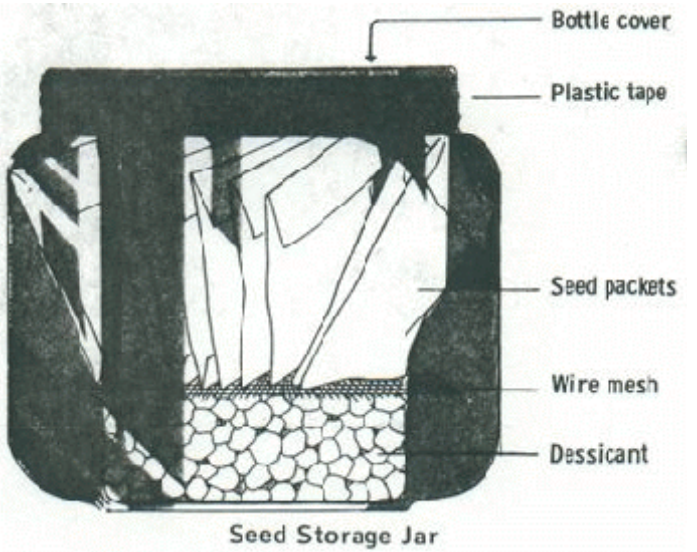
PRE-STORAGE SEED TEST

There is no point in storing or planting seeds that are not viable or will not germinate. In order to be sure that the seeds to be stored or planted are viable, it is important that a germination test be done before storage or planting. Testing viability of seeds can be done by placing a number of seeds in a jar or dish with moist paper towel and allow to germinate. If 80% or more of the seeds germinate, the seeds are good and suitable for either planting or storage.

STORE SEEDS PROPERLY

Keeping seeds dry during storage is most important. Moisture causes seeds to rot. See to it that moisture from the air or any other sources does not get into the seeds. A simple, inexpensive but efficient storage container can be made out of a canning glass jar with an airtight lid. Get a clean jar. Make sure it is dry. As a precaution against moisture, put a layer of powdered charcoal (dessicant) on the bottom of the jar. One-half inch thickness is sufficient. If silica gel or calcium chloride is available, these should be substituted for the charcoal. Place the seeds in an envelope so they do not get in contact with the charcoal; place in a jar and cover tightly. Periodically check the dessicant: if it feels moist, change it with fresh material. The storage jar should be kept in the coolest place in the house, preferably in a frost-free refrigerator. Low temperature prolongs the life of the seeds. With this method of storage, seeds can be kept without significant germination loss.

MAXIMUM STORAGE PERIOD FOR SEEDS KEPT UNDER OPTIMUM CONDITIONS			
SEEDS	PERIOD	SEEDS	PERIOD
Beans	1 year	Eggplant	2 years
Broccoli	2 years	Canaloupe	2 years
Cabbage	2 years	Okra	8 months
Cauliflower	2 years	Onion	8 months
Celery	2 years	Pepper	1 year
Chinese Cabbage	2 years	Pumpkin	1 year
Corn	8 months	Radish	2 years
Cucumber	2 years	Tomato	1 year
Watermelon		2 years	



PRE-PLANT SEED TEST

Even after all these precautions have been taken, it is advisable for the home gardener to run another test for seed viability before planting. Follow the same procedure as outlined under pre-storage seed test.

SEED COMPANIES AND DISTRIBUTORS	
VIRGIN ISLANDS Cruzan Gardens Colquohoun Box 430, Christiansted St. Croix, USVI 00820 Tel. 778-0700 Gannett Corp. General Port Terminal Box 649, Christiansted St. Croix, USVI 00820 Tel. 773-1034 Bryan*s Plants& Garden Supplies 3 Dorothea, Charlotte Amalie St. Thomas, USVI 00801 Tel. 774-1136	National Sales Manager Peto Seed Co., Inc. Staicoy, Calif. 93003 Otis S. Twilley Seed Co. P.O.Box 65 Trevose, Pa. 19047 Northrup, King & Co. 1500 Jackson St., N.E. Minneapolis, Minn. 55413 Reuter Seed Co., Inc. New Orleans, La. 70179 Mr. Richard Sakuoka Dept. of Horticulture Plant Science Bldg. 3190 Maile Way Honolulu, Hawaii 96822
U.S. MAINLAND Asgrow International Corp. Kalamazoo, Michigan 49001 Keystone International Seed Co. P.O. Box 1438 Hollister, California 95023	JAPAN T. Sakata & Co. C.P.O. Box Yokohama No. Yokohama, Japan 220-91 Takii & Co., Ltd. P.O.Box 7 Kyoto Central Kyoto, 600-91, Japan

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