



A GUIDE TO PLANTING & SAVING SEEDS

We encourage any patron who borrows seeds to use this guide to educate themselves on the practice of saving seeds. There is no penalty or fine for not returning seeds. We acknowledge that not all seeds will germinate, and not all plants will survive. If you are unable to save your own seeds, please considering donating a packet or two of fresh, commercially grown, open-pollinated (non-hybrid, non-GMO) seeds to keep our library stocked for future gardeners. Thank you!

Bensenville Community Public Library
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HERBS

BASIL *Ocimum basilicum*

Variety: Large leaf

Planting seeds: EASY

Plant outdoors in full sun after danger of frost. Sow about 6" apart and cover with 1/4" of soil. Seedlings emerge in 7-14 days. Thin to about 12" apart. Harvest when buds begin to form. Container friendly.

Saving seeds: MODERATE

Basil must flower before it will go to seed. The seeds are contained in the spent flower heads. Cut off the brown and spent flower heads and allow them dry for a few days in a warm, dry location. Crush the heads over a paper towel or white piece of paper and pick out the flower head debris. Basil produces very tiny black seeds.

CHIVES *Allium tuberosum*

Variety: Garlic

Planting seeds: EASY

Sow outside after danger of frost in full sun. Sow seeds thinly and cover with 1/4" of fine soil. Keep evenly moist. Seedlings emerge in 7-14 days. Thin to stand about 3" apart. Container friendly. Chives are a perennial and will return to your garden year after year.

Saving seeds: EASY

Allow the flower heads to dry out on the plant. You can tell when the seeds are ready to harvest when you see black spots inside the flower heads. If you shake the plant and seeds start to fly out, it's time to collect the seeds. To collect chive seeds, gently shake the flower heads over a container. You could also clip the flower heads off the plant and drop them into a paper bag. Then fold over the top of the bag and shake it to release the chive seeds from the flower heads.

CILANTRO/CORIANDER *Coriandrum sativum*

Planting seeds: EASY

Plant outside after danger of frost. Sow seeds thinly and cover with 1/4" of fine soil in full sun. Keep evenly moist. Seedlings emerge in 14-21 days. Thin to stand about 12" apart. Container friendly.

Saving seeds: EASY

Cilantro must flower before it will go to seed. The flowers are small and easy to miss. The flowers will then form small green balls, which will become the seeds. Once the cilantro seeds turn brown, they are ready to be collected. Allow cilantro seeds to dry on the plant before collecting them.

Cilantro seeds are very easy to collect – simply pinch the seeds off the plant, and drop them into a container or saved seed envelope.



VEGETABLES

ACORN SQUASH *Cucurbita pepo*

Variety: Table Queen

Planting seeds: MODERATE

Acorn squash needs plenty of space to grow. Mound your soil into a small hill and sow seed to 1" depth in full sun after danger of frost has passed. Seeds need warmth to germinate and are very frost tender. Seedling emerge in 10-14 days. Plants need a rich soil and should be fertilized monthly with a good all-purpose fertilizer. Harvest in fall before the first frost, when the skin is tough enough to resist being pierced by a fingernail. Leave about a 1" piece of stem attached. Acorn squash can be stored for up to a month in a cool dry place or two weeks in the refrigerator.

Harvesting seeds: EASY

Remove seeds from flesh and wash any remaining flesh or strings from the seeds. Lay seeds out in a single layer on a paper towel to dry. The seeds dry fully in approximately 5-7 days. They will harden up and shrink a little in size.

BEAN *Phaseolus vulgaris*

Variety: Blue Lake Pole

Planting seeds: EASY

Sow seeds 1" deep and 6" apart in full sun after danger of last frost. Thinning is not usually necessary. Continue to sow in between rows after seedlings emerge. Plant near fence, trellis, or provide 6' to 7' pole to climb. Big yields of 6-inch, straight, meaty beans. Seedlings emerge in 7-10 days.

Harvesting seeds: EASY

Allow some beans pods to ripen on the plants until they are dry, turning brown and seeds start to rattle inside. This could take up to a month after your harvest. Once the pods have dried, remove from the plant and allow them to dry fully for at least two weeks. After two weeks, shell the beans from the pods.

BEAN *Phaseolus vulgaris*

Variety: Tendergreen bush

Planting seeds: EASY

Sow seeds 1" deep and 4" apart in full sun after danger of last frost. Thinning is usually not necessary. Continue to sow every three weeks in between rows through midsummer for continuous harvest. Beans ready to harvest will be about 6" long, narrow, and meaty. Seedlings emerge in 7-10 days. The first harvest will be the largest, but plants will continue to bear fruit throughout the season.

Harvesting seeds: EASY

Allow some beans pods to ripen on the plants until they are dry, turning brown and seeds start to rattle inside. This could take up to a month after your harvest. Once the pods have dried, remove from the plant and allow them to dry fully for at least two weeks. After two weeks, shell the beans from the pods.



BEAN *Phaseolus vulgaris*

Variety: Pencil Pod Black Wax Bush

Planting seeds: EASY

Sow seeds 1" deep and 4" apart in full sun after danger of last frost. Thinning is usually not necessary. Continue to sow every three weeks in between rows through midsummer for continuous harvest. Beans ready to harvest will be about 6" and bright yellow in color. Seedlings emerge in 7-10 days. The first harvest will be the largest, but plants will continue to bear fruit throughout the season.

Harvesting seeds: EASY

Allow some beans pods to ripen on the plants until they are dry, turning brown and seeds start to rattle inside. This could take up to a month after your harvest. Once the pods have dried, remove from the plant and allow them to dry fully for at least two weeks. After two weeks, shell the beans from the pods.

BEET *Beta vulgaris*

Variety: Detroit Dark Red

Planting seeds: EASY

Start beets outdoors in spring or 6-8 weeks before first fall in frost. Sow seeds ½" deep in loose well-drained soil in full sun or partial shade. Beets prefer a cool climate and can tolerate a mild frost. Seedlings emerge in 6-12 days. Keep soil moist for best growth, easy harvest, sweetest flavor. After harvest, save those leaves. Leaves can be cooked or enjoyed raw in a salad.

Harvesting seeds: MODERATE

Allow some beets to grow up and wait until the beet tops have turned brown before attempting beet seed harvesting. Remove about 4 inches off the top of the beet plant and store in a cool, dry place for two to three weeks. This will allow the seeds time to ripen. The seed can then be hand raked from the dried foliage inside a paper bag or over a white piece of paper.

BROCCOLI *Brassica oleracea*

Variety: De Cicco

Planting seeds: MODERATE

Sow broccoli seeds ¼" deep in fine, well-drained soil. Plant broccoli in a location that gets plenty of sun. Sow in spring or midsummer for a fall crop. Seedlings emerge in 10-21 days, thin to 16" apart. Plants need a rich soil and should be fertilized monthly with a good all-purpose fertilizer. Broccoli is grown for its immature flower heads. Harvest broccoli before they mature ("bolt") and lose flavor.

Harvesting seeds: MODERATE

Broccoli seeds are hidden in the pods that form after the yellow flowers bloom from the broccoli heads. You should allow some of your broccoli heads to go to flower, after which the seed pods form. For easier harvest, pull the entire plant from the soil and allow the pods to dry on the stalk for about 2 weeks. Remove the dried pods and crush them in your hands over a paper towel. Broccoli seeds are round, very small, and black/brown in color.



KALE *Brassica oleracea*

Variety: Italian Nero Toscana

Planting seeds: EASY

Plant outdoors in early spring; sow ¼" down in full sun. Kale is not fussy; it will germinate in temperatures as low as 42 degrees and high as 95 degrees. Kale can be sown all summer for a continuous harvest. Seedlings emerge in 5-17 days, thin to 12-18" apart. Harvest the young leaves at the top of the plant to encourage the plant to produce more young tender leaves.

Harvesting seeds: EASY

Each plant will send up stalks that can get tall. The stalks are brittle and in high winds will detach from the plant. This can happen before the seed has time to mature. If you are experiencing this, tie up the stalks around a stake for support. Once the green seed pods have started to dry out, it is time to harvest seed. Cut the stalks at the bottom of the plant, invert them into a large paper bag and wait for them to dry out completely. When the stalks have dried, hand-rake the seeds away from the stalks over a white piece of paper. Kale seeds are small, dark and round. Kale likes to reseed itself, so you may find yourself with new kale plants next spring.

LETTUCE *Lactuca sativa*

Variety: Romaine tri-colored blend

Planting seeds: EASY

Lettuce prefers cooler weather, sow in full sun about 1/8" down in spring for an early summer harvest or late summer for a fall harvest. Keep soil evenly moist and thin regularly. Does not like to be overcrowded and grows best with plenty of space for air circulation. Seedlings emerge in 7-14 days. Thin to about 12" apart. Lettuce will wilt or become bitter in hot temperatures.

Harvesting seeds: MODERATE

Lettuces are ideal plants to save seeds from as they do not cross-pollinate, which means the seeds will produce identical plants to the parent plant. Allow some of the lettuce to grow flower stalks. Stalks can grow 2-5 feet tall. Seeds begin to ripen 10-24 days after flowers shed their pollen. Harvest seed heads as they begin to dry, carefully pinch the flower heads off the plant, and drop them into a bowl or bag. Once you get them inside, break apart the flower heads and the lettuce seeds will fall out. Lettuce seeds are small, flat, and oval shaped.

ONION *Allium cepa*

Variety: Walla Walla sweet

Planting seeds: MODERATE

Onions like a fertile soil with consistent watering. Sow in full sun ½" deep in early spring; plant enough to allow overwintering of a few plants for seed collection the following year. Seedlings emerge in 7-14 days. Harvest when bulbs start to fatten up and stalks turn yellow and flop over. Onions will store in a cool dry place for about a month.

Harvesting seeds: MODERATE

Onions are biennials. Biennials only bloom and produce seed during their second year. After planting your onions, do not harvest all the onions; instead leave a few to overwinter in the garden for the following year. In late fall, cover onions with dried leaves. *(Continued on next page...)*



ONION *Harvesting seeds continued*

In spring, you'll find that the plants haven't grown much over the winter, but with luck most have survived. Midsummer, the onions will send up flowers stalks. Once the flower balls dry out, you will notice small black seeds start to appear. Separate seeds from the pod.

PEA *Pisum sativum*

Variety: Sugar snap

Planting seeds: EASY

Peas like cooler weather and regular watering. Sow seeds 1" deep and 6" apart. Peas can adapt to either full sun or part shade. Thinning is not necessary, but allow vines to climb up fence or trellis. Plant in rich soil in early spring or late summer for a fall harvest. Peas can tolerate a light frost. Seedlings emerge in 7-14 days. Pods can be picked at any stage. Pick pods regularly to encourage more fruit.

Harvesting seeds: EASY

Allow some pea pods to stay on the plants until they become fully ripe. Pea seeds dry from the outside in; harvest seeds when the pods are dry, brown and starting to wrinkle. Remove seeds from pods and spread out on paper towel to dry.

ZUCCHINI SQUASH *Cucurbita pepo*

Variety: Cocozelle

Planting seeds: EASY

Plant in full sun and rich soil two weeks after last frost. Prefers a warmer soil in order to germinate. Sow 1" deep, water consistently. Seedlings emerge in 7-10 days. Thin to about 24" apart. Harvest regularly to encourage more fruit.

Harvesting seeds: EASY

Remove seeds from the flesh of the zucchini. Rinse the pulp from seeds with water. Lay seeds to dry on a paper towel or cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Allow seeds to dry for about 2 weeks. Stir seeds occasionally to be sure all seeds have dried evenly.



FLOWERS

GAILLARDIA *Gaillardia X Grandiflora*

Variety: Sunset Goblin

PERENNIAL

Planting seeds: EASY

Sow ¼” deep in well-drained soil. Plant in early spring in a location with full sun. Seedlings emerge in 8-15 days. Mature plants are drought tolerant. Cut back flowers as they fade to encourage continuous blooming. They perform well in borders and containers.

Harvesting seeds: EASY

Allow some flower stalks to stay on the plant after flowering. Cut off the flower stalk once the petals drop and the seed heads begins to look brown and dry. Place the seed heads in an opened paper bag and allow the seeds to dry for 10-14 days. Once dry, gently rub the seed head to dislodge the seeds over a paper towel or white piece of paper. Remove any stems or non-seed material.

HOLLYHOCK *Alcea rosea*

Variety: Apricot

PERENNIAL

Planting seeds: EASY

Plant seeds in full sun in the spring after danger of frost is past. Sow seeds ½” deep in average soil 6 to 8 inches apart. Keep evenly moist during germination. Seedlings emerge in 7 to 14 days. Perfect for cut flowers or a back of the garden border.

Harvesting seeds: EASY

At the end of the growing season, allow some flowers on your hollyhocks to dry and go to seed. The petals will fall to the ground and leave large fuzzy brown pods. Snap the hollyhock seedpods off the stalks. Crack open the seedpods and separate the seeds from the pods and each other. Allow the seeds to fully dry on a paper towel for about a week.

MARIGOLD *Tagetes erecta nana*

Variety: Sunshine Orange or Lemon Drop

ANNUAL

Planting seeds: EASY

Select a sunny location to sow seed ¼” deep in spring after danger of frost has passed. Keep evenly moist during germination. Seedlings emerge in 5-7 days. Remove faded flowers to encourage more blossoms. Perfect in borders and containers.

Harvesting seeds: EASY

As your marigold plants begin to dry out, wait until the petals are brown and dried out and the base, which is the seedpod, is starting to turning brown. Remove the dried flower head from the stem. Lay out a sheet of paper towel. Hold the base of the stem, pull off and discard the dried petals and leaves. You will see the slender, pointy, two-colored seeds inside attached to the base. Separate them and spread them on a paper towel. Allow the seeds to dry for about a week.



SUNFLOWER *Helianthus species*

Variety: Ornamental mixed colors

ANNUAL

Planting seeds: EASY

Select a location in full sun with average soil. Sow seeds 1/2" deep after danger of frost has passed. Seedlings emerge in 5-10 days. Keep plants well-watered when young. Mature plants can withstand heat and drought. Cut flowers regularly to extend bloom. Perfect for cut flowers or back of the border.

Harvesting seeds: EASY

Once your sunflowers have died back completely and the backs of the blooms are brown, it is time to harvest. The seeds should be plump and somewhat loose. Cut the stalks with pruners about one foot down and place in a container that can catch any loose seeds. Rub the seed head firmly over a large bowl to catch the seeds. Pick out seeds from the rest of the sunflower debris and rinse. Allow the sunflower seeds to dry on a paper towel for 3-5 days.

ZINNIA *Zinnia augustifolia*

Variety: Classic

ANNUAL

Planting seeds: EASY

Zinnia grow best in full sun after danger of frost has passed. Sow seeds 1/8" deep in rich well-drained soil. Seedlings emerge in 5-10 days. Deadhead zinnia flowers to prolong flowering. Zinnia are best suited for borders and containers.

Harvesting seeds: EASY

Stop deadheading zinnias towards the end of summer to allow the flowers to develop seeds. Leave the brown flowers on the plants so the seeds can ripen. Seeds are ripe when the flower heads become dry and somewhat brittle. Once you have dried blooms, remove them from the stem with scissors. Place the pods on a paper towel and allow to dry completely. Once dry, crush the outer shells of the pods by rolling them between your hands to release the seeds. Separate the debris from the seeds.

