

## Seed Saving by Poppy Irwin, Isanti Co. Master Gardener

Saving seeds from your own garden is economical and easy. Select seeds from vigorous, healthy plants with ripe produce for harvesting seeds. Choose open-pollinated varieties rather than hybrid varieties. Hybrid vegetable and flower plants are products of crosses between two different varieties. Even if the hybrid plants produce viable seeds, the plants grown from these seeds will not be just like the parent plant. They will be a completely new combination of the good and bad traits of the original plant.

Open-pollinated plants such as tomatoes, peas, peppers and beans are good choices for seed saving. These plants are self-pollinating. Open-pollinated varieties may be "heirlooms". Heirloom plants are varieties that have usually been passed down from one generation to the next, keeping the seeds the same as the original plant.

Vine crops such as cucumbers, melons, squash, gourds and pumpkins are pollinated by insects. These types of plants may be cross-pollinated from one variety to another. The current crop will not be affected but seeds that have been cross-pollinated will produce fruit unlike the original parent plant and is often inferior. For seeds that are embedded in pulp try to harvest the seeds from fully ripened produce on a sunny day after the dew has dried from the plants. Cut open the produce, remove all pulp and fiber from the seeds and place them on a screen, newspaper or paper plate to dry indoors. If you plant only one vine crop you can save the seeds and be reasonably sure your plants the following year will be the same as the parent plant. However, if you have close neighbors who plant different vine crops the neighborhood bees may have cross-pollinated them.

Bean, pepper and pea seeds are the easiest to save. For peppers, leave the peppers on the plant until they are fully ripe and start to wrinkle. Remove the seeds from the pepper and spread them out to dry indoors. For pea and bean seeds, allow the fruit to stay on the plant until they become dry and start to turn brown, rattling inside the pods. This may take about a month after you would normally harvest the peas or beans for eating or canning. Pick the pods from the plants and spread them out indoors to dry for at least two weeks before shelling. You can also save the seeds in their pods until the next spring.

Once you have dried your seeds, store them in tightly sealed glass containers or individual paper packets. Keep seeds cool and dry. Be sure to label and date your seeds so you know what is in each packet or jar the following year.

This information was taken from the University of Minnesota Extension website ([www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu)) and Seeds Savers ([www.seedsavers.org](http://www.seedsavers.org)). Picture was taken by me from peppers, Kentucky Wonder pole beans and squash grown in 2016.

For more information, visit Isanti County Master Gardeners website at <http://isanticountymastergardeners.com/>, U of MN Ext website at [www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu) or call the Isanti Co. Master Gardeners at [763 689 8254](tel:7636898254). You may also visit us on Facebook: Isanti County Master Gardeners.

