



## Saving Rare Heirloom Seeds Checklist

### Before the season

- Confirm the variety is open-pollinated/heirloom, not F1 hybrid.
- Grow only one variety per species for rare types when possible (e.g., one sweet corn, one vining squash) to reduce crossing.
- Note each variety's species and pollination type (self- vs cross-pollinated) in your garden journal.

### During the season

- Tag your best, healthiest, most true-to-type plants early; reserve them for seed, not eating.
- For cross-prone crops, use simple isolation: distance, blossom/mesh bags, or staggered bloom times.
- Watch for off-type plants and mark them so you do not save their seed.

### At harvest

- Allow dry-seeded crops (beans, peas, many flowers) to fully mature and dry on the plant before collecting.
- Harvest wet-seeded fruits (tomatoes, squash, melons) when fully ripe or slightly overripe.
- Collect seed on a dry day, into clean containers, away from rain and dew.

### Processing seeds

- Dry-seeded crops: shell or thresh, then spread seeds in a single layer to finish drying until hard and brittle.
- Tomatoes: ferment seeds in a small jar of water a few days, rinse off gel, then dry well.
- Squash/melons: remove pulp, wash, and dry seeds on a non-stick surface in a thin layer.

## **Labeling and storage**

- Label every batch with crop, variety, year, and any isolation notes.
- Store in paper packets inside an airtight container, in a cool, dark, dry place (cool room or fridge back).
- Plan to re-grow and refresh very rare varieties regularly to maintain viability and vigor.

## **Backup and sharing**

- Share a portion of rare seed with trusted gardeners or a local seed library as “insurance.”
- Include variety history and growing notes when you share, plus whether seed was isolated or may have crossed.