



Growing Guru



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DRY SEED COLLECTING

Seeds that are dry at maturity are likely the easiest to collect for future planting. These include annual flowers, perennial flowers, some vegetables, and herbs (annual & perennial). Over the years I have expanded the number of varieties that I collect, because these can be easily stored, packaged, and shared with other gardeners. Most of what I have learned about seed collecting is by trial and error and, of course, by searching the internet for its wealth of shared information and videos. Long ago (pre-internet?) I did borrow several seed collecting books from the [Minuteman Library System](#), but I found most focused on vegetables and at the time I was more interested in saving flower seeds. However, now that I have again searched on "seed saving," I do see many new books to check out (so do consider doing that literally).

Many dry seeds readily fall out of their fruit structure when fully mature, so I use a large dish basin, plastic shoe box, or other large flat container to tip the top of the plant over as the seeds fall out. This works well for columbines, balloon flowers, poppies, and pinks. Other seeds are collected by snipping off from the plant and placing in various plastic containers, which are readily available and mostly white (seeds show up well). Fruits and seeds are allowed to dry further before cleaning seeds from chaff and storing in envelopes or prescription bottles. All seeds need to be well labeled, especially with the year of collection (for viability). I write on the envelopes or place tags inside the bottles. Store in cool, dry, dark space.



Clockwise from top: swamp milkweed, kale, chives, tall marigolds, petunias.

Some seeds with fluffy parachutes or exploding tendencies, may disperse before you collect them. Using organza or tulle party favor bags over flowers like violets helps capture the ripening seeds.

Most dry seeds should not be collected until the fruit structure is clearly dry, likely brown, and already releasing seeds, which indicates seeds are mature. However, there is a greater chance of dry bits (chaff) mixed in with the seeds if left drying long. I use a regular kitchen strainer to remove large pieces and retain the seeds. The fine mess orange sieve is to remove the finest debris from the seeds. Bean sprouting devices with a screen lid are also helpful in cleaning dry seeds so that they will store well.



Buckets and funnels are useful for transferring sieved seeds into medicine or spice bottles once dry.

