



# Growing Guru



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## WET SEED COLLECTING



At the end of the gardening season, do you have some vegetables still on the plants that have grown too old to eat, or you are just tired of them and didn't get around to sharing. Or perhaps they are sitting on your kitchen counter getting over ripe there as well. With these circumstances consider saving seeds from very ripe fleshy fruits, such as cucumbers and tomatoes. And yes, these "vegetables" are fruits, because they are formed from a flower and have seeds inside. While it is a lot easier to collect seeds



from fruits that are dry once they have ripened, such as in flowers, herbs, peas, & beans, you can grow more heirloom vegetables if you save the seeds from fleshy fruits too. Heirlooms are plants that are open-pollinated and will breed true year after year, such as the lemon cucumber or the brandywine beefsteak tomato. To collect these "wet seeds" so that they will remain viable for 3-5 years, the gelatinous layer on each seed should be removed by fermentation. The purpose of the gelatinous layer is to inhibit germination of the seeds while in the fruit, but removing it helps remove seed-borne diseases, ensures that the seed remains dry during storage, and helps it germinate more quickly when planted. Here are the basic steps for wet seed collecting.



Scrape the seeds with as little pulp as possible and place in jar of water. Let sit for several days.

Allow the mixture to ferment. Mold will form on top. Viable seeds will sink to bottom.

Pour off the floating pulp and the non-viable seeds, rinse and pour again, and then wash through strainer.

Dry seeds for about a week on plastic plate or lid because seeds are easier to remove than from paper.

[Sow True Seed](#) and [Growing For Market](#) illustrate their process. Great advice for seed saving is provided by the Cooperative Extension offices in [New Hampshire](#), [Maine](#), and [Georgia](#). High Mowing Organic Seeds in VT describes their process for [Wet Seed Production](#), helping us appreciate the effort it takes to make heirloom seeds available. Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, also known for their heirloom seeds, provides instructions for [tomato seeds](#), [cucumber seeds](#), and a [chart](#) for wet and dry seed collection of vegetable and herb seeds for home use.