

Let Us Save Lettuce Seed!

Lettuce is ideal for beginning seed savers and people with small gardens.

Lettuce is self-pollinating. A minimum isolation distance of 3 metres is recommended. If you have different varieties close together just let one variety go to seed. Ideally you will let about 6 plants go to seed to preserve genetic diversity, but if you only have room for one that is okay. Select strong, healthy plants, nibble a leaf, does it taste good? Choose plants that are slow to bolt to encourage that characteristic.

Leave your lettuce plants in the garden, they will start to bolt and in a few weeks will produce a flower head. Lettuce flowers look like tiny dandelions, they will produce dozens of these tiny flowers. A few days after flowering you will see fluffy seed heads. Seeds are ready to harvest when they've formed seed clusters topped by white fluff.

You can pick individual seed heads as they open or when a good portion of the seeds are ripe cut the whole flower stalk and place in a labeled paper bag to finish drying in your house.

Once the seeds are completely dry you can rub them between your fingers to release the seeds from the seed heads or rub through a 1/8" screen. You will get some chaff which you can blow away by blowing gently or use a fan. A little chaff is okay. Label your seeds and store in a cool dry place. Lettuce seeds stay viable for several years.

*Don't forget to donate some seed to the Seed Swap and share with a friend.

As a bonus you will probably have some lovely volunteer lettuce come up in your garden next spring!

*Source: **Seeds of Diversity-Saving Lettuce Seed***