



Goodness Grows in East Texas: Saving Your Own Seeds

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July 16, 2013

Why save seeds?

- Cost savings
- Seed availability
- Reliable garden performance
- Making your own plant crosses

Have you had seed failures?

Most likely due to the following reasons:

- * The seeds were from a hybrid
- * The seeds weren't stored properly
- * There was varietal crossing due to lack of isolation



Don't sweat the failures

“Failures are finger posts on the road to achievement.”

C. S. Lewis

“If you learn from defeat, you haven't really lost.”

Zig Ziglar

A Few Basics

Threshing - to beat or flail the stems, husks or flower heads to remove the seeds.



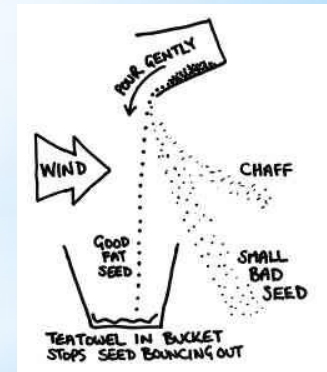
Chaff - thin dry bracts or scales that enclosed the seed; undesirable parts



chaff

seed

Winnowing - separating chaff from seed by blowing, fanning, etc.



What you might need:

- Bucket or container (easy to thresh in)
- Mesh or sieve (to remove most of the chaff)
- Storage method (glass, metal, paper)
- Labels! (names and DATES are essential)



Planning to save

- Don't grow multiple varieties of the same species close together, because you will get cross-pollination.
- Plant appropriate distances for the varieties or
- Create some physical isolation (bagging flowers or caging a larger stand of plants works for self-pollinators)
- Keep a close watch on the flowers, fruit and seed heads so that you can catch them before they start to dehisce, or break open.

When to save?

When seeds have reached maturity (full ripeness - readiness to harvest) you can do one of the following:

- *Wait until seeds have dried on the plant
- *Pick them and air dry them
- *Fermentation (for the wet/fleshy seeds)

Basic steps: drying on vine

1. Choose healthy plants! Save seeds from more than one plant in order to ensure a broader genetic base.
2. Watch the seed heads carefully so that you can catch the seed before mother nature disperses them.
3. Once the seed is mature and dry, cut the stem and thresh in a container.
4. Pick out large bits of chaff by hand or use mesh.
5. Winnow (although it is possible to save the seed without winnowing)
6. Dry seed for a few extra days on mesh or paper towel or by putting them in an envelope and storing the envelope with desiccant (stir or rub occasionally to prevent clumping.)

Basic steps: air drying

1. Choose healthy plants! Save seeds from more than one plant in order to ensure a broader genetic base.
2. Pick mature flowers or seed heads and lay out to dry on paper towels or mesh
3. Once relatively dry, thresh in a container.
4. Pick out large bits of chaff by hand or use mesh.
5. Winnow by blowing on it(although it is possible to save the seed without winnowing) or for larger quantities or larger seed winnow in a breeze.
6. Dry seed for a few extra days on mesh or paper towel or by putting them in an envelope and storing the envelope with desiccant(stir or rub occasionally to prevent clumping.)

Black-Eyed Susan

Rudbeckia sp.



Self seeds readily and can be re-sown into your flower beds simply by dead heading. When flower heads look grey and shaggy and lose their tight structure, shake the small seeds out and winnow lightly. Plant immediately or store.



Butterfly Weed

Asclepias sp.



Watch closed pods carefully for signs of opening, then act quickly because the wind disperses the seeds VERY quickly. When pod begins to spit, open it carefully, holding one end tightly. Tug at the seeds firmly, pulling them free from fluff. Sow immediately after collecting if possible, or dry further and then store in a cool dry place.

Purple Coneflower

Echinacea purpurea

Three to four weeks after flowering, shake flower heads to see if seeds fall out. If so, cut flower stalks at base and invert into a paper bag or container. Shake vigorously to free seeds. Sow immediately or store in cool, dry conditions. An heirloom method is to plant the entire seed head, or portions of it, then thin seedlings as they come up.



Four O'Clock

Mirabilis jalapa

Perennial for us in Cherokee County. Seeds sown in spring produce flowers readily. Pods contain one seed each which ripens from green to black. Collect when black and before pods open for seed dispersal.



Petunia



Easily self sows. Seeds capsules form after flower heads fade. Pick brown seed capsules and leave them to dry further in a dish with sides. They will eventually open or can be squeezed to disperse the 200-300 tiny seeds in each. Screen through a very fine mesh.

Other easy flowers

- Shasta Daisy
- Orange Cosmos
- Pansy
- Stock (single flowering)
- Morning Glory
- Sunflower
- Zinnia

*Questions?

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