



INTRODUCTION TO SEED PRODUCTION SUMMARY

Plant biology

If growing crop for seed, you need to know:

- whether it is a self-pollinator or cross-pollinator
- what species it is – look at the latin name of the crop. Then you so can tell if anything is likely to cross with it – other vegetable crops, weeds or field crops.
- whether it is an annual or biennial

Cultivating a seed crop

- crops usually need longer in the ground
- crops can grow large/ take up more space – staking can be important with many crops – they almost always grow higher than you would expect!
- make sure no unwanted cross -pollination can take place – isolate by distance or time, or possibly physical barriers. You can't grow a seed crop if the isolation is not sufficient.

Crop selection

- cull 'bad' plants / select 'good' ones – but you need to decide what is good and what is bad. Observe all the different characteristics of the plant at all stage of growth.
- select from a large number of plants, particularly with outbreeders
- label plants at all stages

Harvesting

- be patient – wait until seed matures on the plant (change of colour of fruits/pods/seedheads)
- 'dry' seeds - harvest on dry day
- harvest into clean containers, avoid contamination. Some crops may need sequential harvesting
- label – the variety and the batch

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Processing

'wet' seeds

- cut fruit to remove seeds – avoid nicking them.
- sluice to remove debris or use fermentation for some seeds.
- dry in cool, airy place
- label variety and batch

'dry' seeds

- thresh pods/seed heads or strip seeds from stalks
- remove by sieving (size) and/or winnowing (weight)
- dry in airy place , temperatures below 30°C
- label variety and batch

Store air dried seeds in a breathable container in dry, cool place

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