

## Seed Savings – Part II

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Many seed varieties developed in Hawaii and passed down through generations are difficult to find today, including Lualualei pole beans, and Kulanui and Kauwela lettuce, for example. These varieties were stress-tested and adapted to our specific climatic challenges. Saving and sharing seed helps to preserve these special varieties not only for the next season, but also for generations to come.

Some seeds, such as beans and inbred corn seed are among the easiest to save. Allow them to dry on the plant, and remove them from the pod or husk, and screen out misshapen or damaged seed. You may have to harvest early and dry it on a patio if mice or birds are a problem. Seed borers love to eat both bean and corn seed, but adding a little diatomaceous earth, essentially ground coral, to the seed will kill borers. Save the large, plump seeds for next season.

Saving tomato seed takes a little more effort. From a mature fruit, squeeze the seed and juice into a cup or bowl and add half as much water as the liquid from the tomato. Allow the seeds to ferment for a couple of days, which will kill off diseases and break down a germination-inhibiting gelatin around the seed. Dispose of seeds that float and also mold on the water surface, and keep the ones on the bottom. Wash seeds in a colander and lay them out to dry in a warm dry place on a flat surface, but not paper because seeds will stick to it. Also, don't leave seeds in a windy place to dry or they may blow away when dry.

For peppers, just scrape out seeds from a very mature fruit, and dry them out until the seeds are stiff and not rubbery. Isolate peppers from other members of the pepper family to prevent unplanned crossings. Eggplant fruit will turn yellow when mature and even wilt. You can either let the plants dry on the vine and scrape seeds out or cut open yellow fruits and scrape out seeds with a spoon.

For lettuce, plants will bolt under high temperatures or when mature, and will produce flower buds resembling milkweeds. Select the last ones to bolt because these are the most heat-tolerant but try to select seeds from more than one plant. When seeds are mature, some flowers will break open exposing seeds. You can either shake the flower head into a brown paper bag to catch the mature seeds, or allow the majority of seeds to mature and cut the heads off. Store them in brown paper bag in a dry place and mature seeds will drop to the bottom of the bag. Collect and put in paper seed packets.

If you plant many different varieties of lettuce in one part of the garden at the same time, there's a good chance they'll cross with each other. This is one way of creating your own varieties. Planting Manoa lettuce next to Romaine types can produce a tall Manoa lettuce. Plant a mix of lettuce varieties and keep the best varieties for seed, usually the last ones to bolt so they'll have some tolerance to our hot weather. You can select for certain characteristics, such as a tight head or a thick leaf or even red stripes.

Further cleaning or separating seed from chaff can include winnowing or using wind to separate them, running it through a screen, or rolling between two flat boards. Gravity can also be used to separate

seeds, especially roundish seeds. Store seeds in medicine bottles or glass jars in the refrigerator, and they will last for a year or even more. If you don't have seed, you cannot plant, and if you cannot plant, you cannot harvest. For more information on seed saving in Hawaii, visit the Hawaii Public Seed Initiative website at <http://kohalacenter.org/publicseedinitiative/about.html>