

Living Clean & Green!

Your Seeds and You

Why Swap Seeds

Seed swaps are a great way to save a little money and get together with other local gardeners. Plus you'll be joining the efforts of gardeners worldwide to preserve plant diversity and keep many heirloom garden plants around for generations to come. After a great community seed swap, you are likely to leave with a handful of packets of new seed treasures. Now what?

Growing Tips

To get the most good from your new seed stash, be sure to learn as much as you can about growing the plants. The first step is to encourage the seeds to actually germinate. Most seeds fall into one of 3 categories for germination:

Stratify

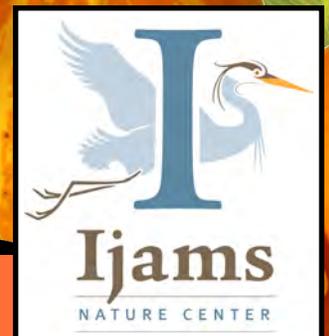
When you stratify seeds, you trick them into germinating by giving them the cold treatment. These seeds benefit from a period of moist cold that mimics natural conditions. Place seeds in a resealable plastic bag half-filled with moist potting soil, seal, and place in a neglected corner of the fridge until you see signs of germination. Lift germinated seeds with a spoon being careful to keep soil around the rooted area and transplant into pots or directly into soil, depending on the plant.

Scarify

Seeds that require scarification have tough seed coats that breaks down over time by decay from bacteria and other microscopic organisms, abrasion, or a freeze/thaw. The simplest way to scarify a seed is to cut into it gently to provide an avenue for moisture to reach the embryo. Once scarified, most seed will germinate quickly and the seedling will require water. You must be able to water if you are going to scarify the seed.

Soak

A good overnight soak will help soften the seed coat. Don't soak seeds longer than 8-10 hours to prevent the seed from rotting. Only soak seeds that will be planted the next day.



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The Other Important “S” Words

Sowing

Vegetable seeds are generally sown directly into the ground once the soil temp is above 50 degrees. Each vegetable has its own sowing needs so read your packets or look up the seed needs. Vine veggies are usually planted in hills (Melons, cucumbers, squash) in a kind of mini raised bed that helps promote drainage and aeration.

Storage

When collecting your own seeds be sure they ripen in a dry and well-ventilated space. Pizza boxes or other low boxes provide ideal conditions. Dry seeds well before storing to prevent mold and mildew. Store seeds in paper rather than plastic to help prevent moisture from rotting seeds. Resealable plastic or glass can be used for long term storage after the chance of mold and mild are past.

The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just on the body, but the soul.

~ Alfred Austin

I grow plants for many reasons: to please my eye or to please my soul, to challenge the elements or to challenge my patience, for novelty or for nostalgia, but mostly for the joy in seeing them grow.

~ David Hobson

