The Castlemaine Seed Library

The Castlemaine seed-lending library is located in the Castlemaine public book library. Vegetable, herb, and flower seeds are donated by local gardeners, these then get packed into custom seed packets at monthly working bees. Borrowers check out seeds for a season; grow them in their garden; use the crop to provide food for their family; and allow some fruit to mature (to produce viable seed); save and dry the seeds; return them to the library to be repackaged and the cycle continues.

Established in October 2016 the seed library is volunteer run, and relies on a community of dedicated gardeners.

Castlemaine Seed Library packets include lots of tips for growing, saving and storing seeds. We don't seal our packets so they can be returned and reused next season.

You're well on your way to heirloom seed collection! Share them around!

Give it a go!

- Get close to nature, learn to nurture your plants and help keep heirloom varieties where they belong, in our gardens and on our plates.

Get involved!

The Castlemaine Seed Library

- Monthly seed packet working bees.
  First Thursday of the month, 11am–12 noon.
  at The Castlemaine Goldfields Library
- Donate or return seeds.
- Financial support or sponsorship
- castlemaineseedlibrary@gmail.com

The Hub Plot demonstration food garden

- Garden Mondays 9 am – 12 noon.
  Open to enjoy anytime
  Rear 233 Barkers Street Castlemaine, through green gate
- hubplot@growingabundance.org.au

Castlemaine Goldfields Library

- Access a great range of gardening and seed books
- www.ncgrl.vic.gov.au/libraries/castlemaine

Resources

Information from this booklet (and more) can be found via these great resources:

- The *Seed Savers Handbook* by Michel and Jude Fanton.
- Seed Savers Network Australia, www.seedsavers.net
- Seed Savers (USA) www.seedsavers.org/learn
- Vegetable Seed Saving Handbook
  www.howtosaveseeds.com
- The Diggers Club www.diggers.com.au
- Organic Seed Alliance (USA),
  www.seedalliance.org/all-publications/
- Global Seed Network,
  www.globalseednetwork.org/seed-tips.php

Supported by

MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE COUNCIL
mountalexander.vic.gov.au

The GROWING ABUNDANCE Project Inc.
www.growingabundance.org.au

the hub plot
www.growingabundance.org.au/grow/hub-plot

Goldfields Library Corporation
www.ncgrl.vic.gov.au

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Growing, saving and sharing seeds around Castlemaine

LOCAL SEEDS
LOCAL SHARING

Seeds belong in community, being grown and harvested each season — whether in a community garden, school patch, backyard or balcony. A majority of the world's seed supply is now controlled by just a handful of corporations. It'll take a dedicated village of people to keep seeds in the hands of communities. Support your local food system!

Home-saved seeds

- Practical
- Simple
- Rewarding
- Quicker to germinate
- Non-GMO
- Resilient to pests & diseases

Saving seeds

- Preserves food diversity
- Builds self-reliance
- Evolves seeds to local conditions
- Shares and teaches skills
- Protects cultural knowledge
- Connects community & land
- Promotes sustainability

1. Planting

Planting information is included on seed packets. Whilst Central Victoria is a 'cool' climate due to cold winters with many areas experiencing frost, we also have long dry hot summers. It's helpful to meet local gardeners throughout Central Victoria to share locally adapted variations across the region.

Seeds require particular soil temperature and moisture to grow. Soil needs to be fine (no clumps/bark) and free draining; sieve garden dirt, sand and compost together or purchase a bag of seed raising mix. Sow seeds at a depth of 3x their height. Water with a mist bottle — if hot, a few times a day — and **do not** let them dry out or over heat. Viable seeds need to be grown before their used by date. The smaller the seed the quicker it expires (ranging from 1 year–4 or 5 years). The advantage of using high quality local seeds is that they acclimatise to our climate, increasing viability and making germination more effective.

Methods

All seeds need to germinate is sufficient water and temperatures that are favorable for plant growth.

• **Provide protected and consistent conditions** by beginning seeds in covered trays/hot house or growing box. Varieties including tomato and lettuce can be planted earlier while the weather outside is not right for them to germinate.

• **After 6-8 weeks**, some seedlings will need 'potting on' from seed raising trays into pots. Do this when the second set of leaves have grown. After 4 weeks seedlings should be ready to 'plant out' in garden.

• **Bio-degradable pots** are great for pumpkin and zucchini seeds. Paper toilet rolls or folded newspaper work well. After 4-6 weeks seedlings should be ready to 'plant out' in the garden in their pot which degrades/ composts.

• **Sow direct.** Seeds like broad bean, sunflower, coriander & peas are best sown direct into the garden where they will grow. They withstand (or need) cooler temperatures or don't like having their roots disturbed from the transplanting process.

Avoid cross pollination

Scientific names identify plants to their genetic family. Plants of the same family are more likely to cross-pollinate. There are eight plant groups: **Brassicaceae** (Cabbage family), **Umbelliferae** (Carrot family), **Cucurbitaceae** (Squash family), **Alliaceae** (Onion family). **Fabaceae/Leguminosae** (Bean and Pea family), **Chenopodiaceae/Amaranthaceae** (Beetroot /Goosefoot family), **Asteracea/Compositae** (Aster/Daisy family), and **Solanaceae** (Potato/Nightshade family).

Understand wind, insect and self-pollination to help prevent cross-pollination and keep seeds 'true to type'. Although sometimes cross-pollinating within a single variety is required, insect-pollinated (rocket and broccoli etc.) or wind pollinated (corn and spinach etc.) are highly likely to cross-pollinate between varieties and can lead to mutated seeds that hold a mix of genetics and may not be 'true to type' when next grown. Either grow varieties apart – by distance or by timing (so that no two varieties flower at the same time), or limit the varieties you allow to go to flower/seed at any one time. Plant isolation distances vary greatly between different plants (eg. Lettuce 8 meters and pumpkin 400 meters between varieties).

The common 'Brassicaceae oleracea' family (broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale and kohlrabi, etc.) are probably the most promiscuous plants amongst veggies and will cross-pollinate with any of their kin. To save high quality pure seeds that maintain and build on the true traits of each plant for generations to come, it is suggested to grow them 1 kilometre apart (or ensure no two varieties flower at the same time).

2. Harvesting

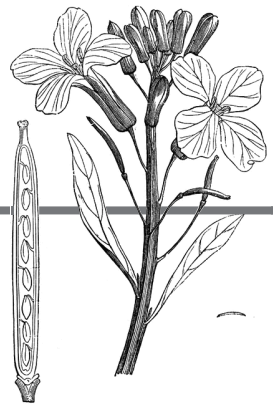
When planting a garden for seed saving allow time and space for your plants to flower. Many plants produce seeds 'annually' at the end of every season. With some staking and a little patience you'll have your very own seeds! In selecting the plants from which to save seed, assess the condition of the whole plant, look for disease and insect resistance, drought tolerance, vigour, colour, earliness of fruiting, lateness of bolting, hardiness and trueness.

Choosing

It's possible to influence future crop characteristics by selecting seeds on the basis of size, shape, colour, productivity, flavour, shelf life, and more. Although it is not guaranteed that these characteristics will be expressed in the next generation, it will over time influence the traits of your seed stock.

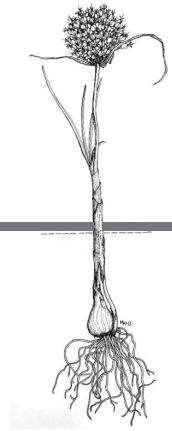
Identify a few of the strongest and healthiest plants in your crop to harvest from.

- Seeds in pulp (tomato, eggplant etc.) are best picked when overripe - after table stage.
- Fruits eaten prior to maturity (corn, cucumber, zucchini etc.), for seed purposes will need to stay on the bush for a lot longer, an additional 3-5 weeks to mature before they can be picked and seed collection can occur.
- Fruits eaten when mature (pumpkin, capsicum etc.) are best picked at the same time for the table as for seed saving. Leave to sit for a further 3 weeks after harvest then collect/ process the seed.
- Where seeds are the main edible part of a plant (broad bean, pea etc.) seed pods should be left until the plant yellows, dies back (or the fruit begins to wither) and pods dry before picking.
- Plants that have seedpods that explode open when ripe, and spread readily (parsley, radish, rocket etc.) can either be harvested progressively as pods ripen, uproot the whole plant hang it up to collect the seeds in a large paper bag, or embrace natures 'self-seeding'.

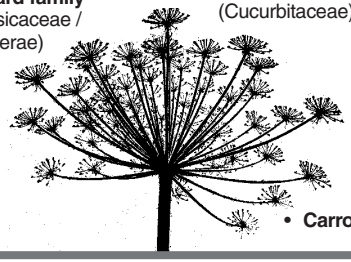


• **Cabbage/Crucifer/ Mustard family** (Brassicaceae / Cruciferae)

• **Squash/Cucurbit family** (Cucurbitaceae)



• **Onion/Allium family** (Alliaceae/ Amaryllidaceae)



• **Carrot family** (Umbelliferae/Apiaceae)

3. Drying

Pods should be dry before being picked and be completely dry before extracting seeds. Once individual seeds are removed they also need to be thoroughly dried.

Cleaning

Separating seeds occurs at different stages throughout the drying process depending on the variety you are saving. 'Winnowing' is a traditional method used for small seeds when they are completely dry to separate husks. Wet cleaning is used for plants that carry their seeds in moist flesh/gel. Finally check and discard any bug affected, damaged or discoloured seed.

Labelling

Clearly mark with name, variety and date harvested. Note growing conditions and plant characteristics.

4. Storing

Conditions are very important to seed viability and vigour. When storing short term (less than 2 years) keep them cool, dry and dark and must be out of direct sunlight. Consistent temperatures found in a south facing room or a cool closet is ideal.