

A Call to Seed Saving Part 3

Weather Forecast

Expect mostly dry weather in Southern regions of British Isles.

In the North and North-West scattered showers are expected.

There is a chance that some other Western parts could see some rain by the end of the weekend and possible showers and thunderstorms in the South starting Thursday through the next weekend.

This could bring spells of heavy rain and perhaps some strong winds for some areas. It may become more settled again towards the end of the first week of August.

Temperatures are ranging from around average in the NW to warm in the South-East, perhaps becoming very warm in the South-East through the weekend.



Easy Seed Saving – Did you try it?

I hope the last post on seed saving and reproduction was useful and you actually had a go to trying it out to save seeds from the easier plants like the tomato and cucumber family and other annuals like the legumes.

For those who have doubts about saving seeds from the legumes like peas and beans, just look out for the pods on the plants to be dry and brown and then take off the pods, store them in a paper bag for a couple of weeks to still ripen out even more in the house.

Then shell and store away in a cool place.

This time I would like to give you hints as to how to save seeds from biennials.

Let's start Carrot family or Umbellifereae:

Biennial Crops for Seed:

Selected and stored carrot, celeriac, celery, parsnips, parsley root plants are lifted in autumn before severe frosts set in and stored in a cool place.

Replant in March and April depending on weather and soil conditions. These can be planted outdoors or in a polytunnel/greenhouse at 15-30 cm in the row and 60-75 cm between the rows. The roots are replanted on flat or raised beds depending on soil condition with the crowns at soil level.

Onions are planted in a similar fashion to roots spacing them though at 20-30 cm in the row and 60-75 cm between the rows.

Leeks can overwinter and either thinned when selecting for seed plants or can be transplanted like onions.



We continue with the Cabbage family or Brassicas:

With winter hardy crops like Brussels sprouts, purple sprouting broccoli, cauliflower and kales can be dug in March and transplanted into their final place at 45-60 cm in the row and 75-90 cm between the rows.

Concerning kohlrabi, swedes and radishes might have to be dug up like other root crops and stored in a cool, protected place and planted outside or indoors as other brassicas.



Harvesting biennial seeds:

Seeds don't all mature at the same time.

So best procedure would be to harvest seed several times or by uprooting plants after first seeds have matured, hanging them upside down and bagging up the seed heads to not lose any seeds, while they ripen in a warm out of the sun place.

Cut the stems with seeds at 1 foot length below the part of stem with seeds.

Apply this method to all root crops, cabbage, chard and onion family.

In warmer, drier climates this procedure might not be needed as seeds ripen well outdoors.

As a second stage after hanging with bags put seed heads on wire frames for final drying before separating seeds from stems by threshing them.

The next step is to clean the seeds by separating the chaff from the seeds, winnowing them with airflow above a tarpaulin.

As these seeds from biennial plants are more varied in size they might have to be sifted for an average, best size of seeds.

In commercial seed reproduction enterprises, they wait for 60-70% of the seed to be mature.

Cleaning:

Make sure that the Chaff and stems are free of disease and insects, which could affect the seeds in storage.

Dry Cleaning:

Is used for seeds maturing in a dry receptacle – capsule, pod, husk or case. Let the seeds dry on the bush.

In case of rain, protect in the plants or harvest whole plants and hang upside down in a warm and shady place.

Winnowing:

The seeds and the chaff or other impurities are wafted away with a gentle breeze.

Putting seeds in an elongated vessel or basket is the secret for successful winnowing (see image).

If some of the chaff does not separate, you can store them together, as long as all is absolutely dry.

Screening: this would be another option to get rid of impurities.

I trust you will get great satisfaction and healthier and stronger plants by following the above instructions and taking initiative to collecting your own seeds.

As they say the proof is in pudding and the best way to learn is to try it out yourself.

Wouldn't it be amazing if we could become sovereign from the big seed companies and have again seed saving exchanges and circles like we had a hundred years ago.

Luckily seed saving circles and events are springing up like mushrooms everywhere making a start to break the cycle of dependence.

Join a local seed saving initiative and enjoy the learning and sharing benefits and a new sense of community.

Enjoy your journey as a custodian for the future of food plants,

Hans-Günther Kern - Wholistic Living University

For online and in person courses and workshops on biodynamic gardening and more visit <https://whlu.org/>