



Lethbridge Public Library

Seed Library Guide

Borrow seeds to grow your own healthy food and contribute to a sustainable community—it's with the help of Lethbridge Public Library. Our seed collection is located at our Main Branch, and here's how it works:

- 1) Browse & Borrow... select what plants you'd like to grow – then checkout the seed packages
- 2) Sow & Grow... plant, tend, and enjoy your crop
- 3) Reap & Return... if you are able, harvest new seeds and return them to the library, packaged to be borrowed by local gardeners next growing season. Returning seeds is not a requirement for borrowing seeds. Seeds returned from successful plants will grow our collection and help cultivate seed stocks best suited to our local climate.

If there is something that you would like to see next growing season, let us know. Or, if you purchased seeds for planting this year, you can choose to save those seeds and donate some to the library to help us grow next year.

Lethbridge Public Library Grows Seed Library is a free community seed initiative that provides an opportunity for local residents to grow their own healthy, affordable food. People can borrow seeds at no charge. They plant, grow, and harvest plants while letting a few plants mature and return to seed. These new seeds are then returned to the library for the next growing season's collection. By returning seeds from successful plants, local gardeners help sustain the library's collection, as well as help cultivate seeds that are especially suited to Lethbridge's growing conditions.

Easy Seed Saving

These vegetables offer the beginning seed saver the best chance for successful seed saving. They produce seed the same season as planted and are mostly self-pollinating, minimizing the need to be mindful of preventing cross-pollination.

Lettuce:

- 1) Once your lettuce plants have sent up their flower stalks, the seeds will begin to ripen.
- 2) Once the stalks are dryish and are producing dandelion-like fluff, you know the seeds have ripened to maturity.
- 3) To collect the seeds, shake the stalk over a paper bag or bucket. (This may be done over a couple days or all at once depending on how ready the seeds are.)
- 4) Gently remove fluff from seeds.
- 5) Put seeds into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 6) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Peas:

- 1) Allow your peas to fully mature (about 3-4 weeks past eating time). You will know when the peas are ready on the vine when the pods (and peas) turn brown.
- 2) Remove pea pods from plant, open them up and remove the seeds.
- 3) Store on a plate or other dry surface for another day or two, or until peas are totally dry.
- 4) Put peas into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 5) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Herbs (Chervil, Garlic Chives, Chives, Tarragon, Dill, Basil, Sorrel, Cilantro, Chamomile):

- 1) Allow herbs to flower and the flower heads to start drying out.
- 2) Snip flower heads off and allow to dry completely in a warm dry place.
- 3) Shake seeds out into envelope then label and date it.
- 4) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Wax Beans:

- 1) Allow your beans to fully mature (about 4 or 5 weeks past eating time). They will eventually become dry and hard.
- 2) You will know when they are done when you shake your dried out plant and hear the dry beans rattling around inside their pods.
- 3) Remove bean pod from plant, open them up, and remove the seeds.
- 4) Store on a plate for another day or so to ensure beans are totally dry
- 5) Put beans into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 6) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Corn

- 1) Allow the ears of corn to dry and mature while still on the stalks. As soon as the ears are dry and the kernels have hardened up, remove the ear from the stalk.
- 2) Remove the husks and let the kernels finish drying in protected location like a garage or shed.
- 3) Kernels will turn hard when they are completely dry and you should be able to rub them off the ears with the palms of your hands.
- 4) Put seeds into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 5) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Zucchini & Cucumber

- 1) Slice the fully matured zucchini lengthwise (it should be beginning to soften when picked).
- 2) Remove pulp and seeds with a spoon and place them in a strainer. (There is no need to soak them like cucumbers!)
- 3) Rinse thoroughly and remove remaining pulp under running water.
- 4) Dry wet seeds completely on a glass or ceramic plate to prevent sticking and clumping.
- 5) Put seeds into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 6) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Flowers

- 1) Choose the most luscious, robust, and healthy-looking flowers to save seed from.
- 2) Allow the chosen flower head to fade and dry out on the plant. Ideally, even the green base of the flower (pedicel) and individual stem should become brown and dry as well.
- 3) Use clean pruning snips to remove the spent flower head. Rather than cutting off the head alone, follow its single stem down until you reach a junction of side branches or leaves, and trim there.
- 4) Extra-crumbly, large, or visible seeds like calendula can be collected directly into your hand from the plant before removing the flower. Otherwise, gather the cut dry flower heads on a clean work surface such as a table or tray.
- 5) As you gently break apart the dry flower heads, sift through and look for developed seeds. Set those aside to save. Mature seeds will be more thick and firm (and usually darker in color) than the surrounding fluff. They will also be located in the centermost portion of the flower head.
- 6) As best you can, sort out the chaff (fluff) from the seed.
- 7) Put seeds into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 8) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Intermediate Seed Saving

The “Medium” seed saver's vegetables produce seed the season they are planted but require separation to keep unwanted cross-pollination from wind or insects from taking place.

Radish:

Separate different varieties being grown for seed at the same time by at least 0.8 km to ensure purity. Radishes will cross other radishes including daikon, but not turnips (*Brassica rapa*) or other members of the Cabbage Family.

- 1) Allow radish plant to bolt and flower. Stake if necessary as plants may grow to 3'-4'.
- 2) Allow the seed pods to become papery and dry and harvest the entire plants.
- 3) Hang the plants in a cool, dry place if all pods are not dried at the end of the growing season.
- 4) Open pods by hand for small amounts of seed. Pods that do not open when rubbed between hands can be pounded with hammer or mallet.
- 5) Gently remove any remaining fluff from seeds.
- 6) Put seeds into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 7) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Pumpkin:

Separate different pumpkin/squash varieties in the same species by at least 0.8 km to ensure purity. Experienced, home seed savers can grow more than one variety at a time in a single garden by using hand pollinating techniques.

- 1) Squash/pumpkin must be fully mature before harvested for seed production. Allow hard shell squashes and pumpkins to cure 3-4 additional weeks after harvest to encourage further seed ripening.
- 2) Slice open a fully matured soft squash (it should be beginning to soften when picked, or pick it and let it soften).
- 3) Remove pulp and seeds with a spoon into a bowl. Seeds should be hard and thick.
- 4) Attempt to extract seeds with your fingers from the majority of the pulp and place them in a strainer.
- 5) Rinse thoroughly and remove remaining pulp under running water.
- 6) Place clean seeds onto a smooth towel and pat dry.
- 7) Spread seeds on a cookie sheet or other large flat surface and allow them to dry completely.
- 8) Put seeds into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 9) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Advanced Seed Saving

The “Advanced” gardener's vegetables normally require more than one year for seed production and mandate separation to prevent cross-pollination. To prevent cross-pollination, separate varieties by distance (at least 0.8 km), caging with introduced pollinators or alternate day caging for small gardens.

Onion:

Varieties within each onion species will cross with each other. Closely planted groups of plants can be caged or bagged and then hand-pollinated.

*** To hand-pollinate, remove cage/bag and use a fine, light paintbrush to mimic the action of visiting insects, thoroughly mixing pollen between several flowers. Make sure to hand-pollinate the flowers during a time (such as early morning or late evening) when insects are not present, and replace covers quickly and securely.

- 1) First year: Mulch in late-fall to ensure winter survival.
- 2) Second year: Allow plants to mature forming flowers and seed heads.
- 3) Wait for the seed heads to dry. Most of the flowers will be dry, and the seeds will begin to fall out on their own.
- 4) Cut the seed heads, from the plants and allow them to dry completely.
- 5) Separate the seeds from the stems and other matter.
- 6) Put seeds into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 7) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Kohlrabi ((*Brassica oleracea*):

All vegetables and varieties in this species will cross-pollinate with each other. These plants must be separated by caging with introduced pollinators or alternate day caging for small gardens.

- 1) First year: harvest central heads and some secondary shoots for eating, then leave a healthy side shoot or two on each plant to over-winter and flower for seeds. Plants should be mulched in the Fall.
- 2) Second year: Heads grown for seed should not be trimmed for consumption.
- 3) Plants will flower and seed pods will mature and dry on stalks. Harvest when dry but before pods naturally split open. Seeds will not continue ripening after the plants or stems are cut.
- 4) You can pick and open individual pods once dried to a light brown color or pull the entire plant after a majority of pods have dried for more seeds.
- 5) Finish drying upside-down in paper bags and any seeds that haven't fallen out naturally can be removed by crumbling the pods.
- 6) Put seeds into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 7) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Kale (*Brassica oleracea*):

Most kales are *Brassica oleracea*, and will cross with other members of this species such as cabbage, collards, broccoli and cauliflower. Siberian Kale, however, is *Brassica napus* and will cross with rutabagas and rape, but will not cross with the members of *B. oleracea*.

- 1) First year: Mulch and overwinter your kale plant.
- 2) Second year: Let your kale plant flower (bolt) and let seed pods mature and dry on the plants.
- 3) As pods begin to dry, cut stalks and allow them to fully dry hung upside down in a paper bag to catch seeds.
- 4) Put seeds into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 5) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Carrots

- 1) First year: Grow your carrots over the summer. Leave the largest, most healthy seeming carrots in the ground over winter. Mulch in late-fall to ensure winter survival.
- 2) Second Year: Prune the tops of the carrots (the green plants) of dead leaves and flowers in the spring.
- 3) Let the carrot plants grow their flowers throughout the summer until the seeds begin to mature.
- 4) You will know when the seeds are mature when they turn brown and detach from the flowers.
- 5) They will fall but most will adhere to the green part of the plant.
- 6) Cut the stalks when about 80% of the seeds are mature, and place upside in paper bags to dry out completely. (Takes one or two days).
- 7) Shake the seeds off the stalks into the bag.
- 8) Put seeds into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 9) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!

Turnips

- 1) First year: Dig turnip roots in the fall and store them in a root cellar, fridge or cold room.
- 2) Second year: Select nicest roots to re-plant – ensure growing point on top is intact. Roots may already be growing leaves before being planted. Plant 12" apart leaving the tops above ground.
- 3) Allow plants to mature to flower (can grow up to 3' tall) and seed pods to dry to a light brown colour before picking and opening by hand. Lower pods dry first.
- 4) Smash unopened pods in a cloth bag with a mallet or by walking on them. Separate seed from debris.
- 5) Put seeds into an envelope, then date and label it.
- 6) Drop the seeds off at the Customer Service desk at the Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch, to share with the community next year!