

# How Long Do Seeds Last?

Kept under the right conditions, seed can remain viable for a very long time. In 2005, a Judean date palm seed about 2,000 years old was planted and grown. The seed was recovered from excavations at Herod the Great's palace in Masada (in Israel). So yes, seeds are extremely resilient.



A few tips on saving seed.

(1) Be sure the seed being saved is *not* from a hybrid plant. When saving seed, choose organic, open pollinated varieties of plants known to produce well and which have desirable traits.

(2) Dry seeds thoroughly. We recommend spreading seed out on newspaper and letting them air dry for about a week.

(3) Keep in airtight containers. Whether you use ziplock storage bags, lidded Mason jars or canisters with gasket lids, keep air out.

(4) Keep sealed seed moisture free. Either wrap two heaping tablespoons of powdered milk in a few layers of facial tissue or get a packet of silica gel. Place this inside the storage container along with the seed packets. Replace every six to nine months.

(5) Keep in a cool, dry place. Remember, humidity and warmth shorten a seed's shelf life.

(6) Label kept seed. At a minimum, what it is and the year harvested.

(7) The chart below indicates the number of years a seed can remain viable. Remember that germination rates diminish over time. When dealing with older seed, simply plant more and expect less.



Beans	5-8	Lettuce	3-8
Beets	6-10	Melons	5-8
Broccoli	5-8	Onions	2-4
Cabbage	4-7	Parsnips	2-4
Carrots	3-5	Peas	3-6
Cauliflower	5-8	Peppers	3-6
Celery	8-12	Pumpkins	6-10
Chard	6-10	Radish	5-8
Corn (Flint)	6-12	Spinach	5-8
Corn (Sweet)	3-5	Squash	6-10
Cucumbers	10-14	Tomatoes	5-10
Kale	4-7	Watermelon	5-8
Leeks	3-5	Zucchini	6-10

SILICON VALLEY SEEDS

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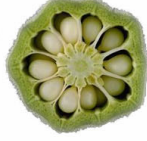
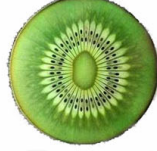
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## SEED SAVING TIPS



Let pods age on the vine until brown. You can also store the entire plant upside down in a warm area until pods dry out. Cross-pollination could affect the purity of the bean seeds in the future. Pole beans are more likely to cross.



Collect seeds when fruit dries and when the fruit separates easily. Remove the membrane of the seed by rinsing and gently rubbing with fingers.



Harvest seed when cucumbers are fully ripe and yellow.



Collect seeds when plant begins to shrivel. Dry out seeds. Peppers from the same species could cross.



Most sunflowers are hybrids. Save heirloom seeds if you want flower to stay true. Hang flower heads upside down by a short length of stalk in a cool, dry place. Once dry, remove the seeds and keep dry until planting.



Let seed pods dry on the plant. Bag the plant to capture the seeds because they will progressively fall off from the bottom to top. Do not save seeds from plants that bolt too soon because the seeds may produce future plants that go to seed prematurely.



Remove seeds 3 weeks after harvesting. Varieties within the same species could cross. Rinse off membranes and dry well.



Save seeds when fruit is full color and firm, but still tender to the touch. Remove the protective cover covering the seed. Cross-pollination may occur with wild or currant tomatoes, but most popular types will not cross.



Harvest seed when squash has a hard skin and is too ripe to eat.



Collect seeds when plant dries. Peas do not cross-pollinate.



Remove fibers and membranes by rinsing. When dropped into a glass of water, viable seeds will sink to the bottom. Seeds that float may not germinate well.

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