

DIGGING IN

At Troy Community Gardens
Madison, WI

Seed Saving

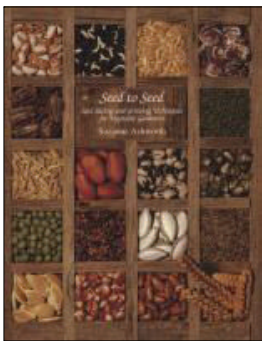
Preserve seeds from your favorite varieties and save money at the same time!

By Jill Schneider

Why save seeds from your garden year to year? For some of us it may seem like a lot of work when a packet of seeds costs only a few bucks at most. Yet haven't you experienced growing a variety that was really exceptional in taste and resistant to diseases and pests? If so, why not save the seeds and plant it again next year. Not only do you save a few bucks, but you also are preserving the exceptional traits of that variety.

For the most part, saving seeds is easy. However, some vegetables are susceptible to cross pollination and inbreeding such as corn. Also, hybrid vegetable varieties will likely not produce a plant similar to last year's. And, don't forget, some common vegetable crops (root crops, carrots, cabbages, parsley and brussels sprouts) are biennials, meaning plants do not form seed pods until their second year.

To understand more about the seed-saving idiosyncrasies of different vegetables, check out this handy [Vegetable Seed Saving Handbook](http://howtosaveseeds.com/index.php) (<http://howtosaveseeds.com/index.php>). There are links for different vegetables with information about how each are pollinated, techniques for preventing cross pollination, advice about saving the seeds and the length of time the stored seeds will remain viable.



The [Vegetable Seed Saving Handbook](#) also includes a section with detailed instructions on [Harvesting Your Seeds](#) (<http://howtosaveseeds.com/seedprep.php>). For those of you without access to the Internet, the book *Seed to Seed* (2nd edition) by Suzanne Ashworth, Kent Whealy and David Cavagnaro is a comprehensive guide to seed saving and growing techniques. There are four copies available through the Madison Public Library.

For those wanting to get started right away, here is the information for saving tomato, pepper and bean seeds:

Tomatoes: Almost all modern tomatoes can be safely grown without isolation and will not cross—'currant' tomatoes (such as Cherry Tomatoes), and 'potato-leaved' tomatoes (such as Brandywine) are possible exceptions and may cross other currant or potato-leaf varieties.

Allow tomatoes to ripen thoroughly on their vines to at least the eating stage before harvesting them to collect their seeds. Upon harvesting, tomato seeds are best fermented in order to remove a germination-inhibiting gel which covers the seeds and to kill diseases. In nature, fermentation of fallen ripe fruits removes this gel, and this process is imitated when preparing tomato seeds. See [Fermenting Seeds](#) and follow the directions.

If fermenting tomato seeds seems too

WORK DAY

SATURDAY
October 22
9 AM -12 NOON

If it is raining on Oct. 22, the work day will be changed to Oct. 23, 9 a.m.

Hnub ua haujlwm pab dawb yog 10/22/11, 9 a.m. txog 12 teev tavs, yog los nag muab pauv rau 10/23/11 9 a.m.

Día de Trabajo

El Sábado 22 de octubre
9 a.m. -12 medio día

Si llegara a llover el 22 de octubre, el día de trabajo será cambiado para el día 23 de octubre 9 a.m.

much trouble, they will still germinate if the slippery gel surrounding the seeds is carefully rubbed off while you're cleaning them. Seeds treated this way will germinate, but they will not have had the protection of the fermentation process killing disease organisms. If you noticed any problems with your plants (leaves spotting or dying, inexplicable wilting, etc.), the extra trouble of fermentation will be well worth the effort.

Dry your tomato seeds on a piece of glass or a shiny plate—the wet seeds will stick to paper and be difficult to remove without damaging them.

Tomato seeds will store safely for 4

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Seed Saving

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or more years after being properly dried and stored.

Peppers: Self- or insect-pollinated, pepper varieties of the same species will cross-pollinate. There is no crossing between varieties of different species, however. You can safely grow one hot or sweet pepper (*C. annuum*) and one Tabasco pepper (*C. frutescens*) without danger of their crossing.

Peppers within the same species can be safely isolated by 500 feet of separation, or they can be caged since the plants are not overly large. Allow peppers to ripen and dry fully on the plants before harvesting the pods. Wash your hands thoroughly with soapy water after harvesting hot pepper seeds, since the residues will burn eyes and lips for some time after contact! Pepper seeds will keep for 2 or 3 years if properly stored.

Beans: Beans are self-pollinated, and different bean varieties do not commonly cross-pollinate each other. Similarly colored varieties should be separated by enough distance to keep the vines from intertwining, to make them easy to distinguish at harvest. Allow pods to dry on the vines before picking and shelling, then finish drying the beans in a dry spot.

If you're eating your beans green, allow just one or two pods per plant to remain and mature for seed. Too many pods maturing on an individual plant will cause it to stop setting more beans and concentrate on maturing the ones it has.

Pick beans for seed after the pods are ripe and have dried on the plants. Don't allow dried pods to get rained on as the beans

may quickly mildew or sprout in their pods. When very dry many pods will split on their own to drop their seeds; the rest can be easily crumbled in the hands and the finer chaff blown away after removing the big pieces. Finish drying the beans in a dry spot indoors or under cover.

Bean seeds, properly dried and stored, will keep for 4 years.

Troy Gardener Seed Exchange?



Last month we introduced the idea of our gardeners saving seeds each year and then exchanging them in the spring. If the article above piqued your interest in saving seeds, why don't you set aside some extra seeds and consider bringing them to the 2012 Spring Registration event (tentatively March 3, 2012) to share with others. At Spring Registration we are going to introduce the idea of a Seed Exchange for Troy Gardeners and determine the level of interest. If a few of us show up with seeds to share, it might get others excited about participating in the future. If you have any suggestions about the proposed seed exchange, please contact Jill Schneider at 241-1821 or schneiderjill@charter.net.

End-of-Season Reminders

Last Work Day/Closing Day is 10/22/11

If you were gardening in plots H61-H120 this year, you must have any fencing and non-organic material removed from your plot by 9 a.m. on 10/22. You must also chop up large stalks (into 6 inch pieces) and spread out compost piles to help plant material decompose over the winter and make plowing easier in the spring. The Plot Monitoring Subcommittee will survey these plots prior to 9 a.m. and note any gardeners who did not comply. **Those gardeners will be moved to the bottom of the plot assignment list for 2012.**

Water Turn Off Date

The water at the Community Gardens will be shut off the week of 10/17/11.

2011 Volunteer Time

You must complete your hours by 11/30/11 or pay for them (\$10/hour) before we accept your application in 2012. If you are currently a Timebank member (as of 10/1/11) and do not complete your volunteer hours for 2011, you may pay for missed hours with Timebank Hours. The last organized work

day is 10/22, but we are under no obligation to find enough volunteer jobs that day. After 10/22/11, you can contact Jamie Pratt at the Community GroundWorks office (608-240-0409 or jamie@troygardens.org) for available volunteer jobs, if any.

Spring Registration Date for 2012

March 3, 2012, is the tentative date for Spring Registration. Please watch for plot applications to be available on the website in mid-February 2012. You will be notified via post card (and email if applicable) regarding the event.



Upcoming Events

Community Gardens Water Shut Off

Week of Oct. 17

CAC Fall Harvest Potluck (free seeds available!)

Wed., Oct. 19, 6-8 pm (see details on Pg. 4)

Community Gardens Work Day/Closing Day*

Sat., Oct. 22, 9 am - 12 noon

* All gardeners located in plots H61 through H120 must have all non-plant material removed from their gardens, woody plant material chopped up, and compost piles spread out by 9 a.m. on 10/22.

Why “Community” is in our Name

Late in the growing season it becomes obvious to the Plot Monitoring Subcommittee that a few gardeners have become overwhelmed by the gardening experience. Besides the weeds that signal a neglected plot, we often see plots with an overabundance of un-harvested vegetables. Gardening a 20 x 20 foot plot can be challenging for all levels of gardeners at times. Everyone has the best intentions, but sometimes those intentions can be interrupted by health problems, family commitments and relocations.

It seems each year about this time the Gardens’ Steering Committee recognizes the problem and discusses it at length. The outcome is typically a solution that is punitive in nature (e.g., 2012 Rule Changes for Neglecting Plots below). However, we can’t stress enough that we are also here to help when those “life situations” arise unexpectedly. The word “community” is in our name for a reason: Troy Community Gardens is a community of gardeners who are here not only to grow vegetables and flowers but to help each other out occasionally.

If you find that you cannot harvest your vegetables and you want someone to collect them and take them to a food pantry, let us know. If you have health issues that prevent you from gardening for a period for time, let us know. If you have to leave the area for a short-time or even permanently, let us know. We can put the word out to the “community” of gardeners and ask for help. It’s as simple as emailing the Plot Monitoring Subcommittee (plotmonitoring@gmail.com) or contacting the Community GroundWorks office (240-0409, info@troygardens.org).

There is a spot on the garden plot application that you can check to indicate it would be okay to provide your name and email and/or phone number to a fellow gardener near you if they need someone to water, weed or pick produce during vacations, illnesses or family emergencies. Please consider checking that box this coming spring when you fill out your application. In addition, an appeal for help can be sent out to all our gardeners when the need arises. Remember, your community gardens can be more than just a square piece of land to you.

2012 Rule Changes for Neglecting Plots

The Gardens’ Steering Committee recently discussed the perennial problem of gardeners who neglect their gardens and let their weeds go to seed, spreading the problem to other nearby plots. In the past, the penalty for neglecting a plot after being contacted was to consider the gardener to be in bad standing. This bad standing status means if the gardener applies for a plot the following year, they are moved to the bottom of the plot assignment list. If we run out of plots to assign, they might not get their plot back. What usually happens, however, is we have enough plots for everyone. Therefore, a gardener who has neglected their plot the previous year often gets their plot back the following year. This has created situations where gardeners are neglecting plots year after year.

The Steering Committee approved the following changes for next year:

- If you have been contacted by Plot Monitoring 3 times in one season and you haven’t weeded your plot(s) as to not impact your neighbors’ plots, you will be asked to forfeit your plot(s) for the current year and will not receive your plot(s) the following year.
- If you are asked to forfeit your plot(s), you can submit an appeal to the Steering/Leadership Committee via the Garden Coordinator. A decision will be made within one week.
- You may reapply for a garden plot after the one year penalty period (e.g., If you forfeit your plot in July 2012, you may reapply for the 2014 season).

Recipe

Black Bean Sweet Potato Burritos

Adapted by Laura Stoesz from *Simply in Season*
by Mary Beth Lind and Cathleen Hockman-Wert

This sweet potato recipe comes from Troy Community Farm intern Laura Stoesz. Laura says, “*The cinnamon-cumin spice combination is one of my favorites. You can bake the burritos as suggested in the recipe, or for quicker prep just warm the tortillas in the oven and serve. If omitting the baking step, cover the sweet potatoes and cook them a bit longer before adding the beans.*”

Sauté in **1 Tbs. oil** in large frying pan until tender:

3 cups sweet potatoes (peeled and diced)

1/2 onion or leek (chopped)

Add and cook until heated through:

2 cups cooked black beans

1 tsp. ground cumin

3/4 tsp. ground cinnamon

1/2 tsp. salt

Divide bean mixture and cheese among the tortillas and roll up:

8 flour tortillas

1 1/2 cups cheddar cheese (shredded)

Place in a 9x13 baking pan. Cover pan with foil and bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes. Garnish with sour cream, salsa, and fresh cilantro.

This recipe appeared in the Oct. 6 issue of Urban Roots, the Troy Community Farm weekly newsletter, and it’s delicious!

CAC Community & Food Pantry Gardens Fall Harvest Potluck

Date: Wednesday, Oct. 19, 2011
Time: 6-8pm
Location: Catholic Multicultural Center, 1862 Beld St., Madison
(CMC is just east of Park Street near Bram Street)



Please RSVP to Shelly at shellys@cacscw.org or Telephone: 246-4730 x 209

- **Free seeds will be available for next season!**
- All community and food pantry gardeners are welcome!
- A great opportunity to find out what's going on at other gardens and learn from one another. Come share your garden's accomplishments this year!

Please bring a dish to pass!

(Hmong) CAC Community & Food Pantry Gardens Fall Harvest Potluck

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Thov RSVP rau Shelly xov tooj yog 246-4730 x 209 email shellys@cacscw.org

- **Free seeds will be available for next season!**
- Peb thov caw kom tag cov neeg ua teb tauj kom tau!
- Yog ib lub caij nyooq zoo los sib ntsib thiab sib tham txog koj daim teb.

**Peb noj Potluck,
nco ntsoov ua ib taig zaub mov nqa tuaj rau sawv daws noj!**

Cena de Cosecha de Otoño para los Huertos Comunitarios

Fecha: miércoles, el 19 de octubre 2011
Hora: 6-8 de la tarde
Localidad: Centro Multicultural Católico, 1862 Beld St., Madison
(CMC está al este de la calle de Park, cerca de la calle de Bram)

Por favor responde a Nicole en nicolec@cacscw.org o 246-4730 x 208

- ¡Todos los jardineros de los huertos comunitarios son bienvenidos!
- Una oportunidad buena para enterarse de que esta pasando en los otros huertos y aprender unos de otros. Vengan y comparten de los nuevos de su huero de este año!
- **Semillas gratis estarán disponibles a todos jardineros para la primavera que viene y para sembrar en casa durante el invierno.**
- Traducción estará disponible bajo petición.

¡Por favor, traiga un platillo de comida para compartir!



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