

AUGUST 2018

Seed Saving

As our gardens have (partly) turned brown due to the drought, there has been at least one benefit; it's been a great year to harvest seeds!

Seed saving is a great way to share plants that you love from your garden, with neighbours and friends. It can save money and bring happiness too, to see your plants right from sowing a seed, to fully in bloom.

Aim to collect seed once it has full ripened. Usually you can tell this because the seeds will fall off into your hand, or the seed pod will be shrivel and dried. Some years, the seeds will turn mouldy on the plant due to excess rain, which is why they are so good this year.

Some seeds are easier to save than others; lettuce is a bit fiddly, but umbrellica family such as carrot and parsnip are easy. Do be aware though that some varieties cross pollinate, such as dill and fennel, so if both are grown close together, you may get a hybrid! And although squash seeds look impressive, do not save these, as they so easily cross with courgettes to grow a large watery fruit! These seeds are better to eat, baked in a little butter and oil with a touch of salt. Do try eating other seeds too, such as nasturtiums in salad to give a peppery flavour. For detailed seed saving guidelines visit www.gardenorganic.org.uk, but just have a go- it's not that hard!

To save, you can either shake them out into an envelope, or you may need to help them out of their papery cases, and dried on some absorbent paper (such as beans). If you don't have time to do this, or your plants are too big, I find cutting off the seed heads and putting them in a pillowcase works well. Any

breathable material is fine, as long as they are not stored in plastic, where any residual dampness will cause them to rot.

Please bring any seeds you have spare to TTW's annual seed swap, always the second Sunday of February at the Dolphin pub (if it is available) 2-4pm. Seed swapping is a great way to save money, grow different varieties, and can help keep heritage plants, that you can't get from commercial seed companies, from extinction.

If you prefer to buy specific varieties, you are welcome to join our NSALG (National Society for Allotment and Leisure Gardeners) group for £3, for much cheaper vegetable, herb and flower seeds. For more information, you can contact Kate, through www.ttw.org.uk.

written by Helen Gillingham