

Community Seed Gardens

considerations for
planting, harvesting, saving and
sharing your seeds

2022 Paradise Permaculture
Institute Seed Extravaganza





Robin Kelson



“

The community practice of selecting, saving and sharing seed is at the heart of human resiliency.

Helping re-establish that practice is why the Good Seed Company exists.



Grassroots and statewide, building a more sustainable MT for all since 1974.

We focus on the sustainable energy, agriculture and community food system sphere, educating by

- engaging community
- building lasting partnerships
- creating spaces where leaders and inspired community models flourish

www.aeromt.org



ABUNDANT
MONTANA

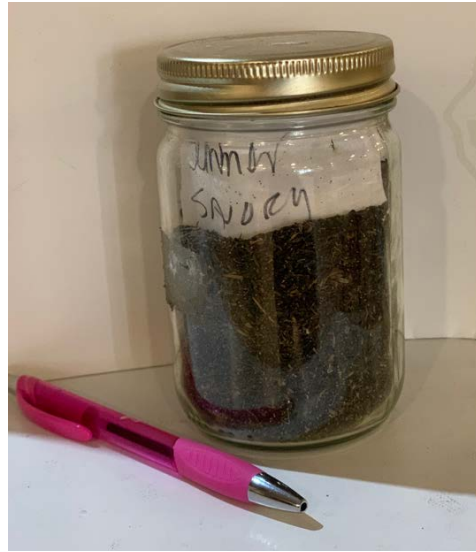
- Montana's megaphone for local food
- marketing and media hub that informs, promotes, and connects
- making it easy for anyone to find and choose Montana farms and food

Join Our Vision

- All Montanans nourished and food secure
- Thriving and respected food providers stewarding our land, water, animals and seeds
- Tangible, inclusive relationships across the entire Montana food web fostering collaboration and partnerships
- Informed consumers advocating for local, nutrient-dense and culturally appropriate foods

abundantmontana.com

Community Seed Gardening



Seed vitality: storage
and the power of
sharing

Planning your seed garden
with “fruits & roots” in mind



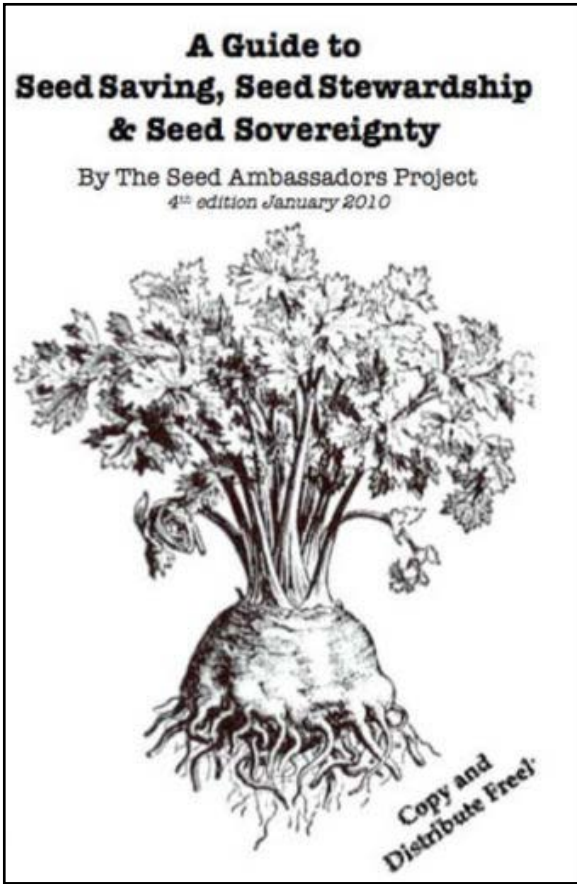
Harvesting: the best
tool for engaging
community

thoughts and conversation

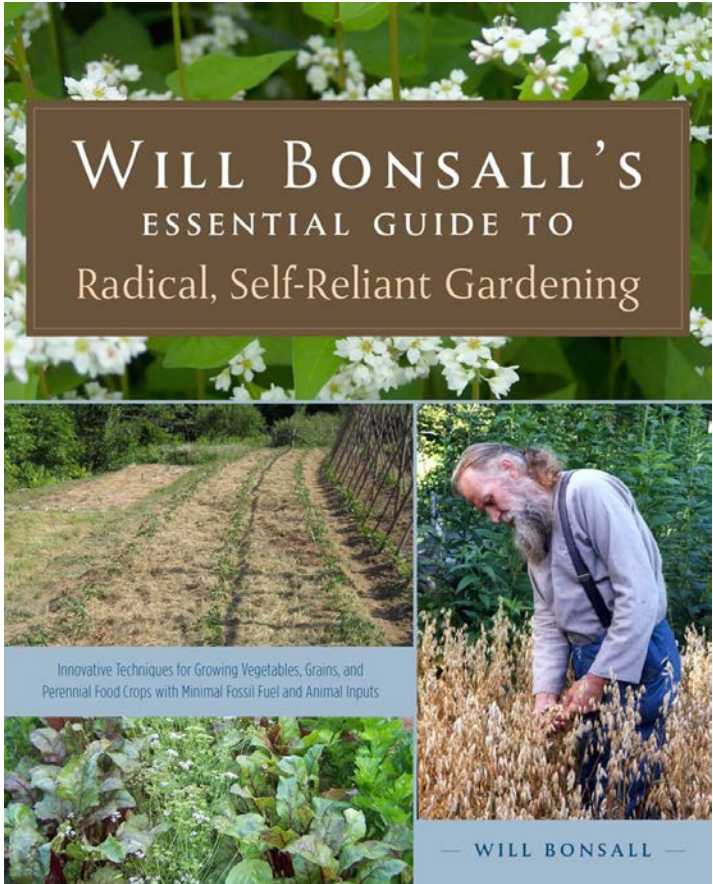
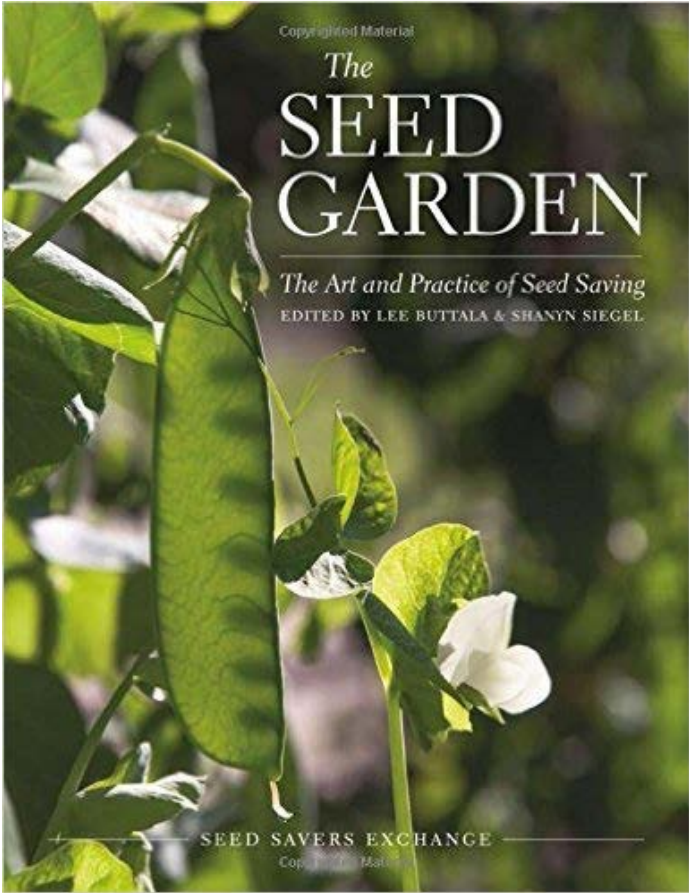


resources - books

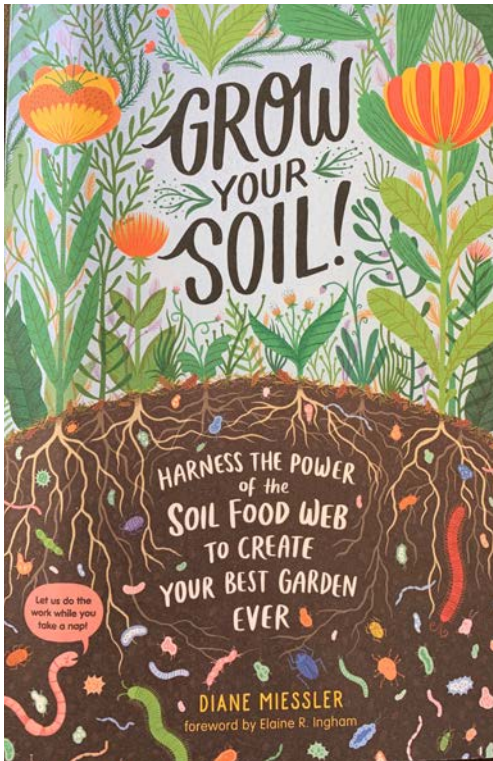
seeds



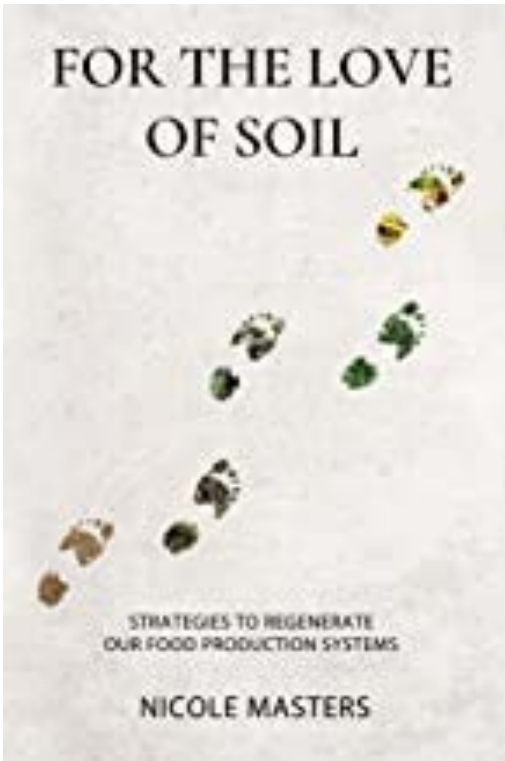
free download
<https://www.seedambassadors.org>



soil



start here



more learning

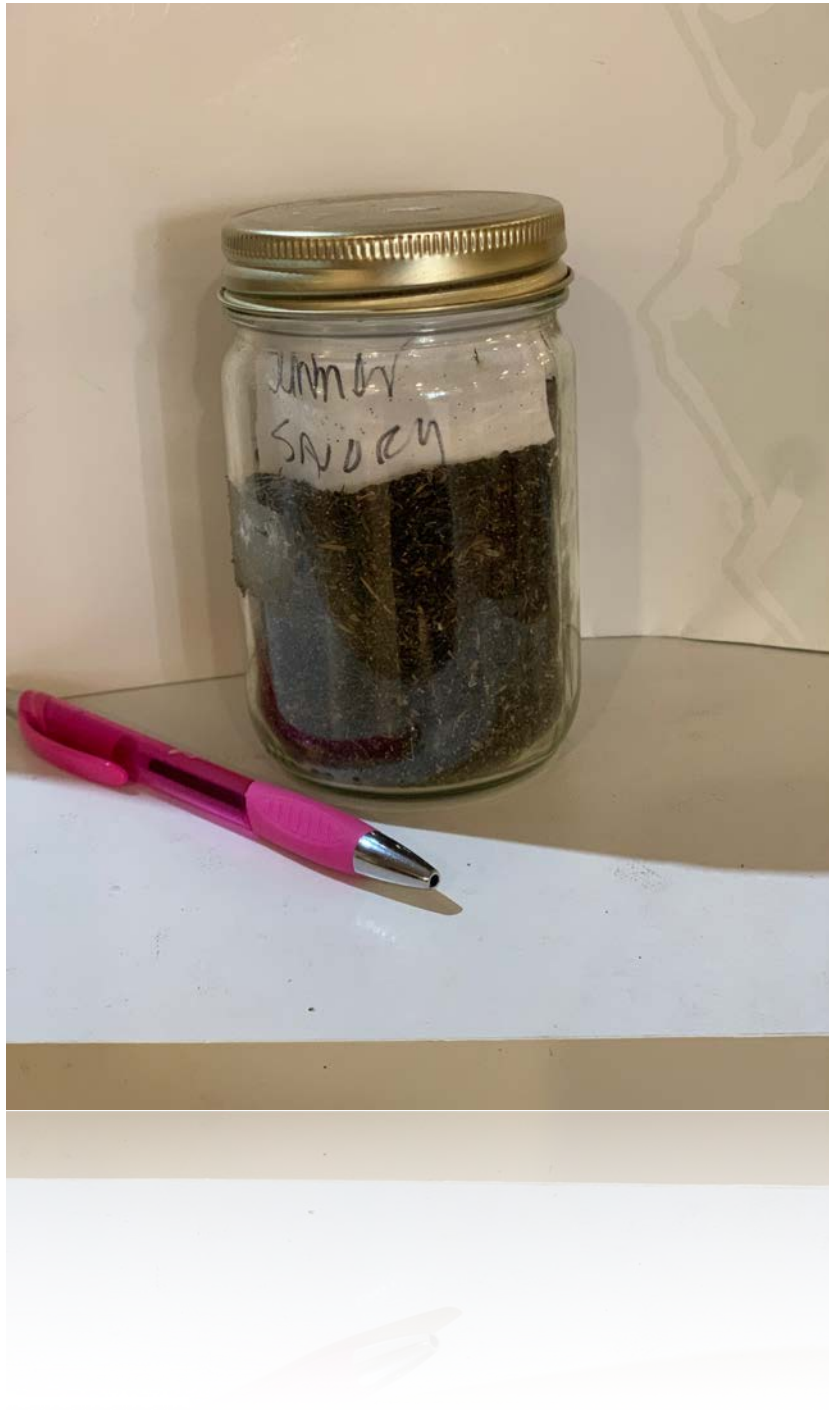
resources - online

<https://www.seedsavers.org/learn>

<https://rockymountainseeds.org>

montana - community seed saving

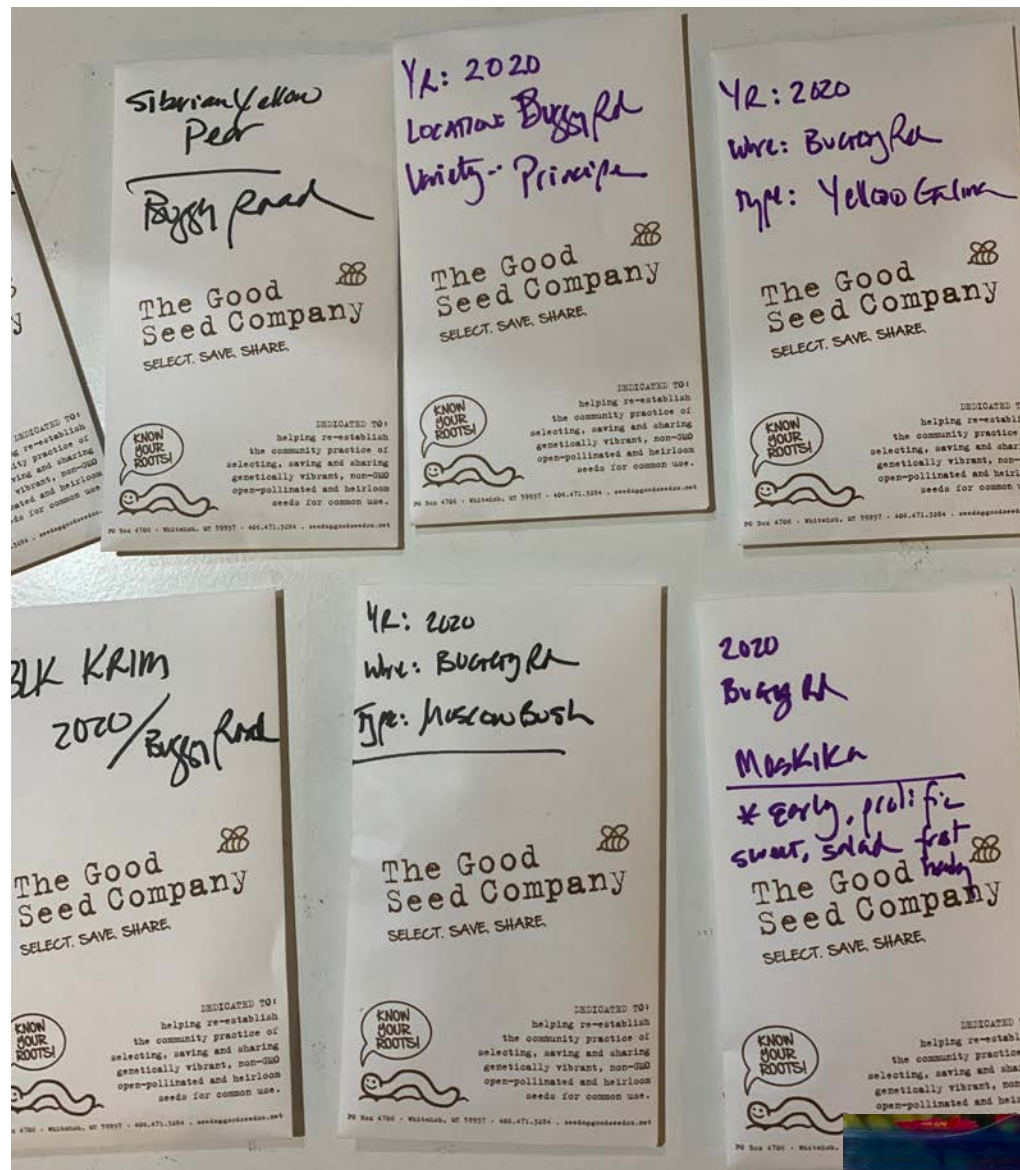
<https://landtohandmt.org/programs/free-the-seeds/>



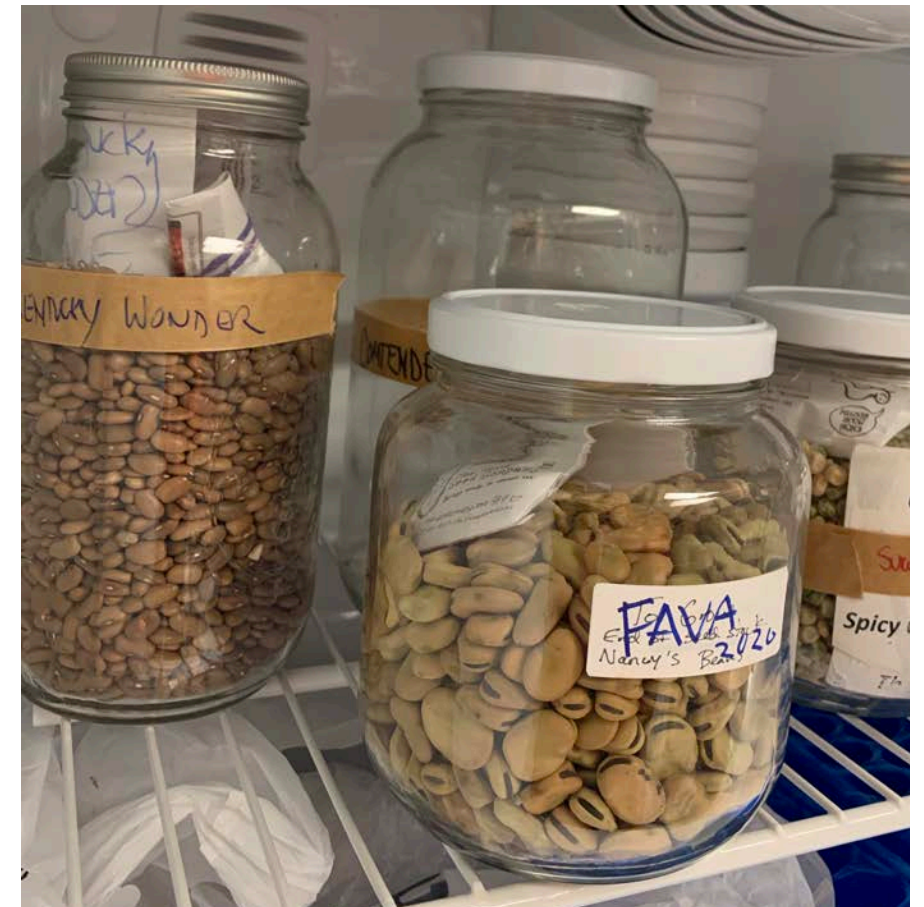
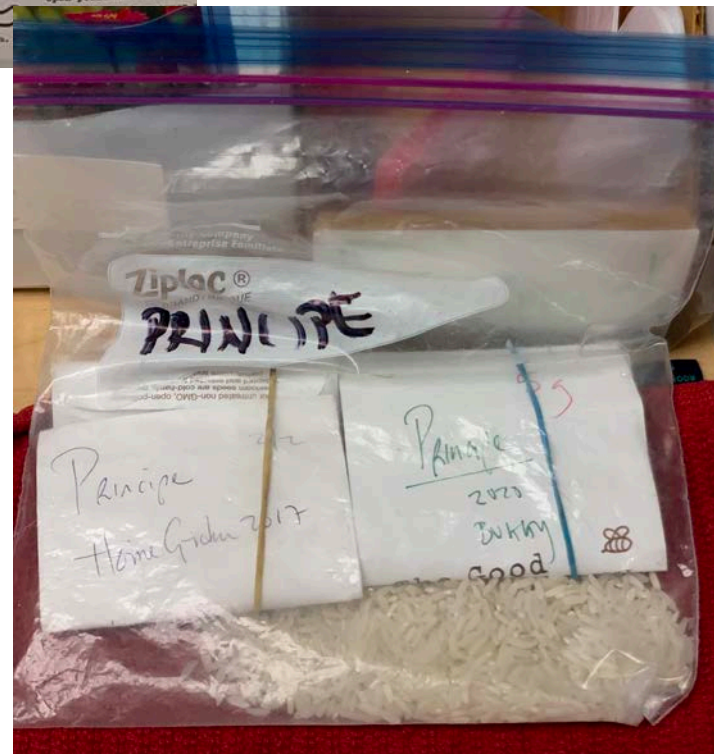
1. Seed vitality: storage and the power of sharing

How do I
store
them?

- ✓ **cool, dry, dark location.**
- ✓ **LABEL! At a minimum: variety and year.** Other useful info can include latin name, favor notes, growing location, observations from the year
- ✓ **Most seeds are viable for AT LEAST 3-5 years this way** (some exceptions; alliums - garlic, onion, chives - and parsnips). Freezing or vacuum sealing can prolong seed life.



- Cupboard in your home away from drafts and heat is great.
- Glass is great - airtight and inert. Also, breakable and bulky.
- Refrigerators are humidifiers. Use a desiccant if storing here (or in freezer).



Seeds are meant to be shared.

best way to maintain vitality is to share, replant and save again.

supports genetic vibrancy and biodiversity, the best hedge against disruptive events

select. save. SHARE.

...and repeat ;-D

2. Planning your seed garden with “fruits & roots” in mind



When are seeds ripe for harvesting?

heirloom

1. **“Fruit” seeds** *(we eat the fruit or the seeds in the “fruit”)*
2. **“Greens & Roots” seeds** *(we eat greens or root)*
3. **Flower & Herb seeds** *(treat like “greens & roots” seeds)*

a plant's purpose is reproduce

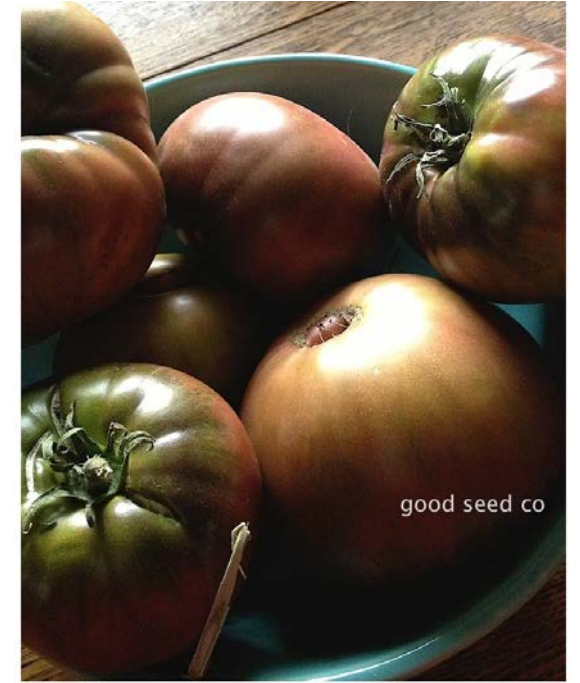
it's life cycle is complete when it produces
ripe, viable seed

1. “Fruit” seeds

Examples: tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, peas, beans, corn, melon, squash, cucumber...

- ✓ **when the FRUIT is ripe - means seeds are mature**
 - ➔ **rule of thumb #1:** seed is mature when **skin changes color and/or hardens** (SOME plants this is the eating stage; MOST plants: 3-5 wks past eating stage)
 - compare: tomatoes and melon vs cucumber, summer squash, bell pepper, corn, peas, green bean
 - ➔ **rule of thumb #2:** leave fruit on plant as long as possible; if weather or time requires you to harvest early, pick fruit and leave in warm, dry, airy place to finish maturing.
 - ➔ **rule of thumb #3:** You can pull whole bean, pea plants and hang upside down in warm, dry, airy place to mature





ready for seed harvest

still ripening indoors



christmas tree peppers ripening on a tray

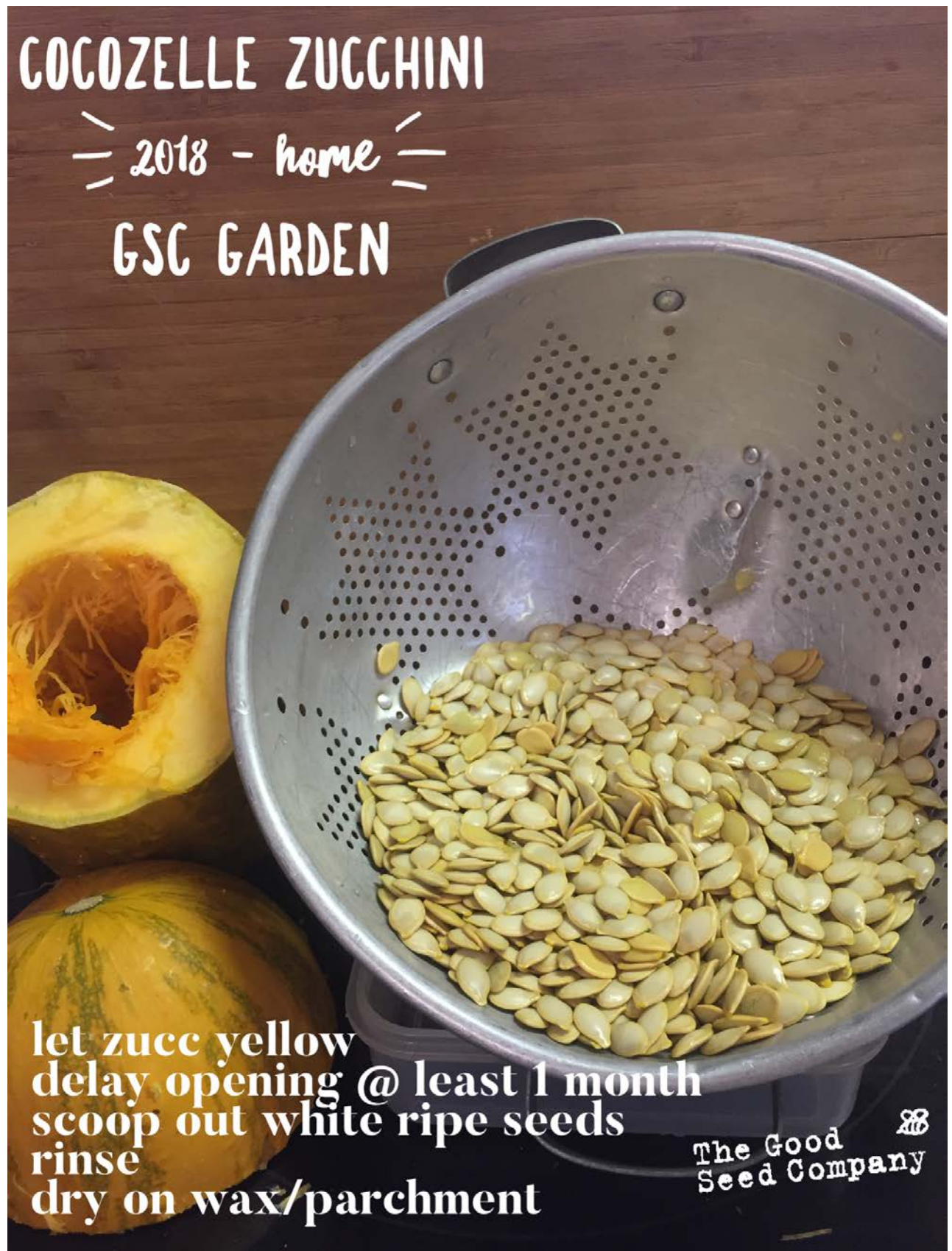
...or in a paper bag





— cocozelle zucchini —
HARVESTED
FOR SEED...FINALLY!

The Good
Seed Company



COCOZELLE ZUCCHINI

— 2018 - home —

GSC GARDEN

let zucc yellow
delay opening @ least 1 month
scoop out white ripe seeds
rinse
dry on wax/parchment

The Good
Seed Company



.....
COCOZELLE SEED FROM
OUR 2018 GARDENS.

READY FOR GERMINATION

TESTING

AND THEN INTO THE

PACKETS THEY GO!

The Good
Seed Company

DAY 1 - CUCUMBER
SEED FERMENTING

00/29/18 = day 1
SOME WATER ADDED

BOSTON
PICKLING CUKE

2018 - WGF GARDEN

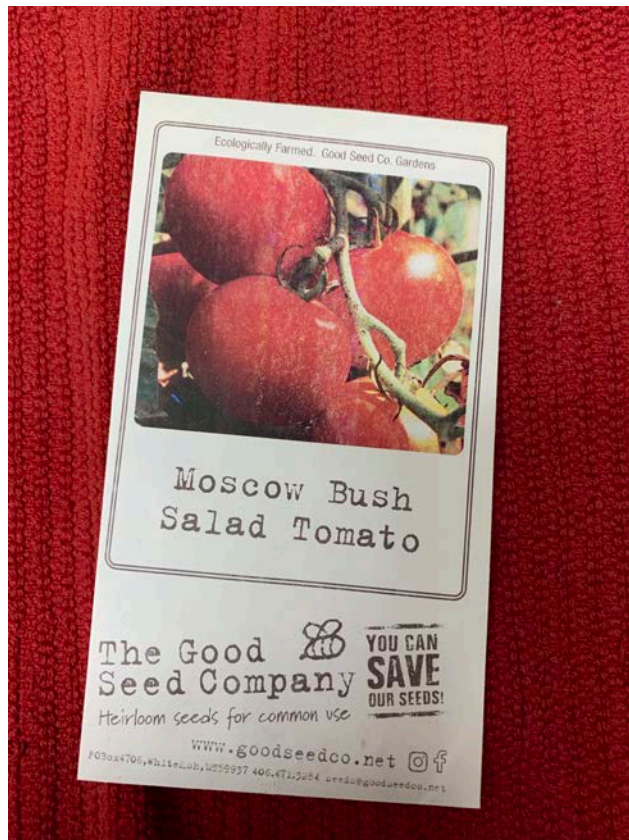
BOSTON PICKLING
CUKE 11/29/18



The Good
Seed Company

“fruit seed” take-away:

plan to leave on plant as long as weather permits to
maximize SEED maturity



- Cage your tomato starts when you transplant into garden
- Reduce water once fruit has set; (prune “suckers”?)
- Harvest ripe tomatoes
- Watch for frost; plan to cover w/ sheet or re-may; fruit/seed will survive
- Tomatoes ripen well indoors - out or in paper bag



PEAS:

- Reduce water once fruit has set
- Candidates for dedicated seed bed
- Watch for frost; **HARVEST** before frost; fruit/seed will NOT survive



BUSH BEANS:

- Reduce water once fruit has set
- Candidates for dedicated seed bed
- Watch for frost; HARVEST before frost; fruit/seed will NOT survive

2. “Greens & Roots” seeds

Examples: lettuce, kale, swiss chard, broccoli, cauliflower, beet, radish, onion, chives, carrot...

✓ let plant flower and go to seed.

➔ **rule of thumb #1:** let seed mature on plant as long as possible; if weather or time requires you to harvest early, once seed has set, you can harvest whole plant, hang upside down in warm, dry, airy location to complete maturation.

➔ **rule of thumb #2:** know your plant’s seed dispersal mechanism. Some pods burst, and **bagging the seed head** while seed is maturing can be useful for capturing ripe seed.

★ **garden planning tip:** “Greens & root” seed plants take a long time to flower and produce seed AND they continue to grow and take up space as they flower. Include this in your garden planning.

★ e.g., radishes and lettuce planted in April, will produce ripe seed by late September; the plants are 3-4 ft high by then

★ Many root vegetable and brassica plants produce seed in their second year (biennials), e.g., carrots, beets, parsnips; kales, collards, cauliflower, broccolis, etc.



LETTUCES, BRASSICAS, RADISHES, GREENS:

- Candidates for dedicated seed bed
- Going to seed (“bolting”) is heat and resource-dependent; a little crowding, water-reduction, covering may assist
- Once seed is set and starts to ripen, bag to capture seed
- Watch for frost; HARVEST before; pull whole plant into leaf bag



seedsavers.org

Special notes:

- isolate same species Brassicas
- radish roots grow to large beet size





CARROTS:

- Candidates for dedicated seed bed
- Cross-pollinating Biennial - follow recommendations for overwintering and pollinator isolation





HERBS:

- Grow in dedicated location; treat as perennial
- Once seed is set and starts to ripen, bag to capture seed. Chive seeds ripen mid-summer
- Watch for frost; plan to cover w/ sheet or re-may; fruit/seed will survive

FLOWERS:

- Candidates for dedicated seed bed; interplant between vegetable varieties
- Once seed is set and starts to ripen, bag to capture seed. Chive seeds ripen mid-summer
- Watch for frost; HARVEST before; pull whole plant into leaf bag

“greens/roots seed”

take-away:

plan on significant plant size increase as it matures into
flower and seed



poppies: nature's pop-top



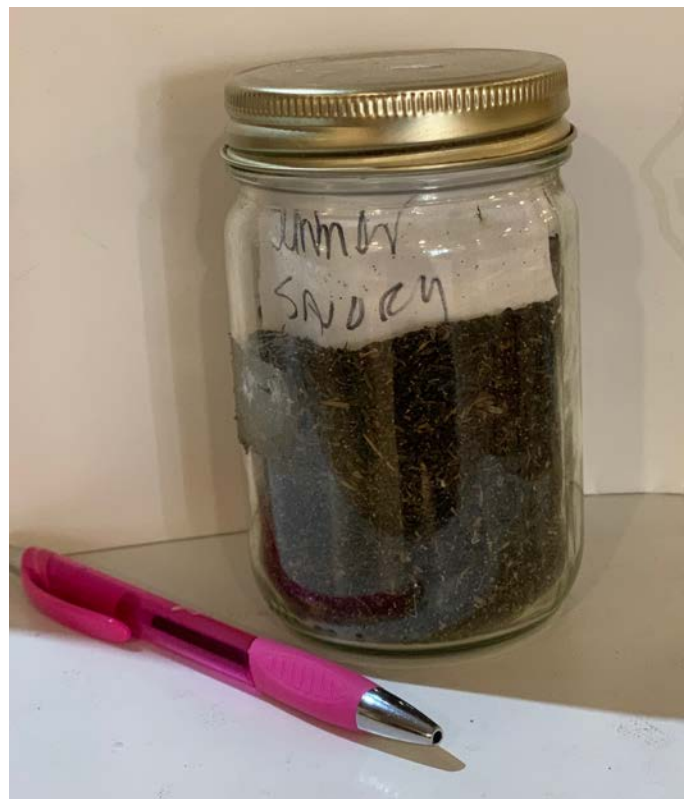
milkweed: getting ready to fly on the wind



my favorite harvest tool



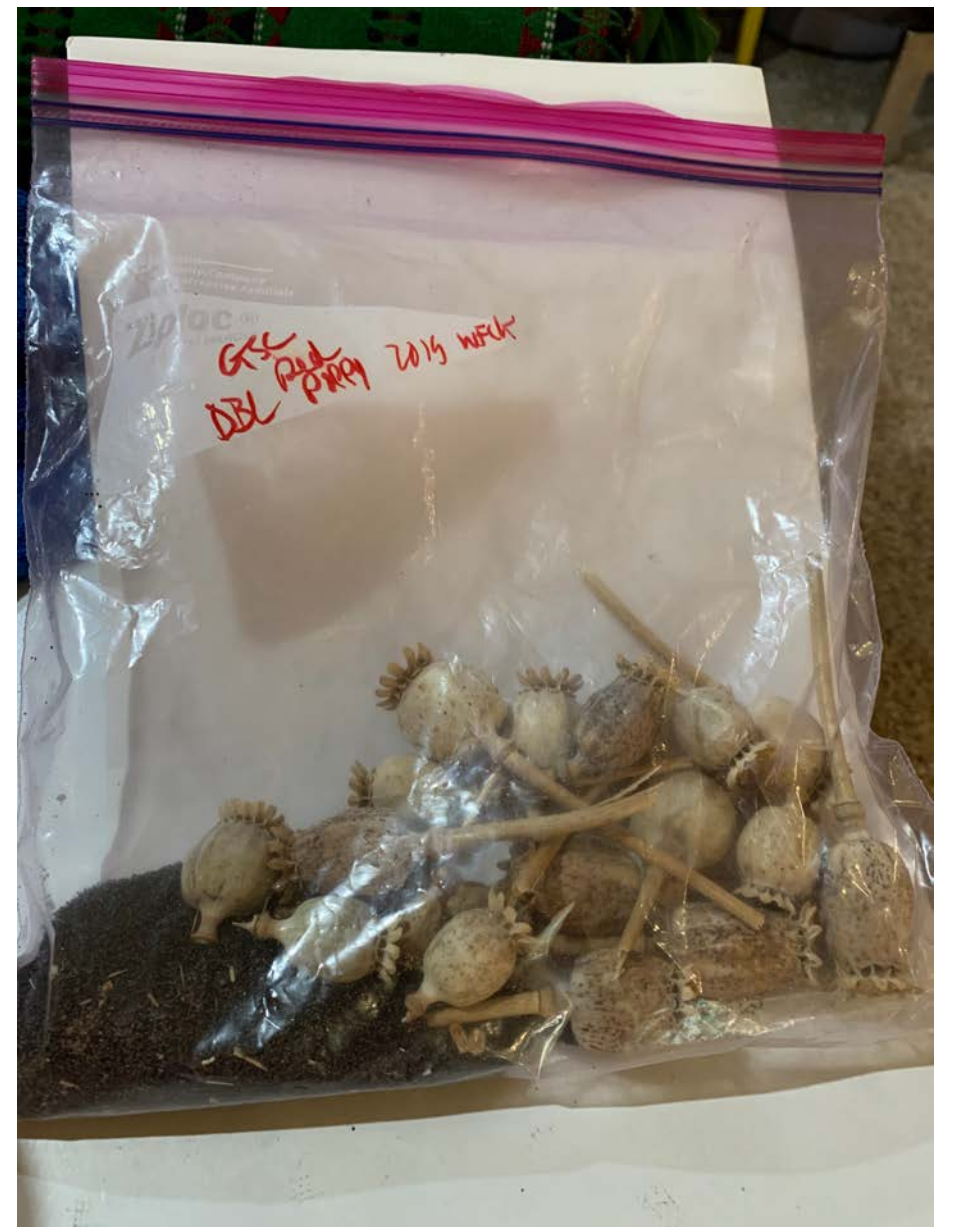
RosieG



perennial herb: summer savory
1 plant; 1 harvest ; pint of seeds



mustard, annual: jiu tuo niao
4-6 plants; 1 harvest ;
3/4 quart of seeds



“annual” flower: red poppy
1 plant; 1 harvest (15 seed heads) ;
1 cup+ of seeds



3. Harvesting: the best tool for engaging community

tried and true
tools and
methods...

** brassicas: radish, mustards, kale,
cabbage, cauliflower, etc.

seed dancing: seeds in shells & pods (e.g., brassicas**)









we are connected to our food and nourishment
life source/force: harvesting seeds in community
awakens that cellular memory in us all

Thank You!



www.goodseedco.net

Overwintering “vernalization” biennials in MT

- growing tip has to experience period of cold to shift from leaf production to flowering
- Options
 - ✓ leave in ground
 - ✓ pull from garden and store
- Considerations
 - ✓ selection
 - ✓ stop leaf growth
 - ✓ minimize humidity fluctuations

YR 1

- brassicas: work with plants seeded for fall harvest
- carrots, beets: work with June-seeded plants
- select vigorous, quality specimens

KEY to In Ground: Insulate the microclimate before the ground freezes

protect with dry mulches (12-16 inches), maybe cover, maybe cage

parsnips are super hardy



KEY to Storage: Insulate against humidity changes

- ideal storage: cold (32-40 °F, 80-95% humidity)
 - root cellar/basement/shed in damp sand, soil, wood shavings
- ➔ root crops: layered & buried
- ➔ brassicas: roots covered
- ➔ brassica heads



- refrigerators are tricky; walk-in coolers act more like root cellars
- to wash or not to wash

YR 2

- isolate to avoid cross pollination
- if caging, add pollinator insect (*musca domestica* pupae)
www.joshsfrogs.com
- brassicas: plant in blocks, 50 plants avoids in-breed seed depression
- replant after last frost
- replanting considerations: beet shoulders, cauliflower head

