



School Gardening  
Resources

PRIMARY LEVEL

**BORD BIA**  
IRISH FOOD BOARD

# Saving Seeds





<b>Time of Year</b>	March to June.
<b>Aim</b>	To save seeds from vegetables, fruit and flowers in the school garden.
<b>Resources Needed</b>	Plants with seeds, string, hessian bag, labels, paper bags, containers, glass yoghurt jars, paper and storage boxes.
<b>Cross Curriculum Relevance</b>	<b>SESE:</b> Living things, environmental awareness & care, recording, observing <b>Geography:</b> Country of origins of plants <b>History:</b> History of agriculture <b>Maths:</b> Measuring, counting, estimating, recording, active learning <b>Literacy:</b> Writing, spelling <b>Art:</b> Drawing, making signs <b>Informal Curriculum:</b> Discover Primary Science



## 1 Definition

**Seedsaving** is the age-old tradition of collecting seeds from current healthy crops to provide seeds for next year's crops.

- ★ Seed saving is an important part of the cycle of nature for children to see, showing the plants come full cycle from seed to plant to food and back to seed again.
- ★ Seeds come in all forms. Some plants produce seeds on the inside of their fruits e.g. tomatoes and pumpkins, and some from their flowers e.g. carrots and cabbage.



## 2 How to save seeds

- ★ Always save seed from the strongest and healthiest plant.
- ★ Dry out the seeds thoroughly before storing.
- ★ Find a spot that is cool and dry for drying and storing, if they get damp or warm they will rot.
- ★ Store in shoe boxes, biscuit tins or paper bags (don't use plastic as it's not breathable).
- ★ Make sure to label and date the seeds.



## 3 Vegetables

### Peas & Runner Beans

Leave a number of beans and peas on the plant to grow large without harvesting them. Allow them to turn brown, remove from the plant, and leave somewhere to dry. Break off the shell and put the seeds in an airtight container until spring.

### Garlic

One garlic clove becomes a head of garlic with 8-12 cloves in the head. Save large strong cloves from your garden harvest, leave to dry and store in box or paper bag until spring.

### Potatoes

The potato itself is the seed, called a tuber. Save the smaller potatoes from your harvest, don't clean them; allow the soil to dry. Store in a dark, cool place in a paper or hessian bag.

### Pumpkins

Harvest your pumpkins for Halloween. When you're scraping out the inside to make your carvings, keep the seeds. Thoroughly clean and wash off all traces of the flesh. Let dry and store.

### Spinach, salads, lettuce & radish

These plants will all send out a flower head at the end of their growing season if not harvested. Let it flower and the seeds will then form from the flower head. Allow to mature on the plant and only cut off the plant when it starts to turn brown. Hang up to dry somewhere warm and dry. These are all tiny seed heads so extract them carefully and store in containers until spring.



### Carrots & beetroot

Produce flower heads in their second year of growth, so leave a few plants in the ground in the autumn harvest period. The following year these will send out a flower head that will then mature into seed heads. Allow to mature on the plant and only cut off the plant when it starts to turn brown. Hang up somewhere warm and dry and leave to dry out. These are all tiny seed heads so extract them carefully by shaking into a brown paper bag. Store in dry containers until spring.

### Health & Safety

- ★ Stay with your group.
- ★ Use tools safely.
- ★ Wash hands after garden session.
- ★ Please refer to the worksheet on Health & Safety for detailed information.





## 4 Flowers

### Calendula

Is a medicinal herb plant, it develops obvious seed heads in winter. Pick off, leave to dry and store in an airtight container.

### Sunflowers

In the autumn, get the children to pick off some of the seeds from the best sunflowers. Check they have a solid seed inside the external hard kernel or they will not grow. Leave the rest of the seed for the birds. Pick off the head and put in the hedgerow or trees.

### Nasturtiums/Lupins/Poppies/Sweet Pea

All of these flowers develop an obvious seedhead in the autumn. Pick off the seed head with the children, and leave to dry. The lupin and sweet pea head will spring open when dry to reveal the seeds. Lupins and sweet peas are quite similar so be careful they don't get mixed up.

**Maths** - Plant 1 sunflower seed and find how out many are harvested from the flower head produced.

**SESE** - Using a sunflower, weigh the dried soil, the pot and the seed, plant the seed and water, at harvesting time, leave everything to dry and reweigh.

**History** - Seed saving throughout history.

**Art** - Make seed packets for saving seeds in, use dried flower heads (after taking seeds off) for a natural art project, look at pattern of the sunflower seed head and research where else that pattern is replicated in nature.

**Research Words:** TUBER, PROPAGATION

### For more information

**Irish Seed Saving Association**

[www.irishseedsavers.ie](http://www.irishseedsavers.ie)