



# Victoria Seed Library

## Curating a Collection of Southern Vancouver Island Seed

The Victoria Seed Library offers everyone free access to seeds and seed-saving education. Our Seed Library contains over 200 varieties of seed, most of which are relatively easy for beginner seed savers to grow and save (in other words, they are primarily **open pollinated** and **self-pollinating**). The collection is donated by regional growers and includes a variety of vegetable, flower, herb and native plant seeds.

### Borrowing Seed

To sign seed out from the Victoria Seed Library, you must be a member. Membership is free! All you need to do is attend one of our workshops or Member Orientation/Seed Saving 101 session. Our seed swaps happen:

WHERE: Greater Victoria Public Library's Central Branch

WHEN: Saturdays (last Saturday of February to last Saturday of April) from 10:00 – 1:00

For further information about all of our upcoming programming and seed swaps, visit:

[www.lifecyclesproject.ca/seedlibrary](http://www.lifecyclesproject.ca/seedlibrary)

### Returning Seed

ANYONE can give us seed. You do not need to be a member to give seeds to the Victoria Seed Library.

Borrowers from our collection are not required to return seeds, but we ask that you commit to trying. If you have success, please bring us back some of your seeds. We will need some people to return seed if we are to maintain our collection in perpetuity.

Growers can return seed to us at all events and Seed Swaps (we will host swaps each fall at the GVPL's Central Branch). You can also bring us seeds to Victoria's Seedy Saturday, where we always have a table.

We accept seeds of local, organic, non-**hybrid** plants. We ask that our growers use organic methods, meaning that they do not use fertilizers or pesticides unless they are certified organic.

If you would like to donate or return seeds, we need to know the name and variety of the seed in order to list it in our collection. We also appreciate knowing the following things:

- Source of Seed: Where or from whom did you originally get this seed?
- Date of Seed Harvest: In what year was the seed harvested?
- Germination Rate: Google "germination test" and look at videos if you do not understand this term.
- Details of Plant: Tell us what you like about this plant, how it grows, things others will be interested in.
- Seed Stories and Anecdotes: Story of where the seed comes from, anecdotes, etc.

The Victoria Seed Library is operated through a partnership between the LifeCycles Project Society and the Greater Victoria Public Library



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*We operate on the territories of the Lekwungen peoples of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nation. Some of our seeds and our methods of growing them came here through the ongoing process of dispossession and colonization. We aim to hold this understanding in our activities and interactions.*



## Glossary of Terms

**Self-Pollination (Selfers):** The pollination of a flower by pollen from the same flower or from another flower on the same plant. In some vegetable crops pollination almost always occurs within a closed flower – we call these crops “selfers” (lettuce, peas, beans, tomatos). Because they are very unlikely to cross with other varieties and create a hybrid, they are the easiest vegetable crops to save seed from.

**Hybrid:** Cross-pollinated with another plant of a different variety; seeds will produce plants with a variety of characteristics and will not be closely similar to parent plants (or true-to-type). Seed companies breed and sell hybrid varieties which are carefully bred by plant breeders (any seed labeled F1 is a hybrid). Seeds from hybrid plants do not grow true-to-type. For this reason, the Seed Library does not accept hybrid seeds in its collection.

**Cross-Pollination (Crossers):** Plants in which the transfer of pollen can easily happen from the male reproductive organ (an anther or a male cone) of one plant to the female reproductive organ (a stigma or a female cone) of another plant. Insects and wind are the main agents **of cross-pollination**. If a flower of a variety you are saving seed from is fertilized by the pollen of a different variety, the resulting seed will be a hybrid. To save seed that will grow true-to-type from cross-pollinating plants, the grower must ensure that the variety they are growing is isolated from other varieties in that species.

**Open-Pollinated:** Generally refers to seeds that will “breed true”. When the plants of an **open-pollinated** variety self-pollinate, or are **pollinated** by another representative of the same variety, the resulting seeds will produce plants roughly identical to their parents. In seed catalogues, open pollinated seeds are identified with the marker OP.

## Where to Start as a Seed Saver?

Start with the easy stuff! We recommend open-pollinated, self-pollinating annuals such as tomatoes, lettuce, beans and peas. Many herbs and flowers are also relatively easy to save seed from and grow true-to-type generation after generation. The goals of growing quality seeds are to produce true-to-type seeds, with good germination, that store well and keep their story and history.

## Harvesting Seed

When harvesting seed, timing is key. It is best to harvest after seeds have ripened and before seeds are released from the plant. It is optimal to collect from dry-seeded plants during dry weather, once the seed pods have completely dried down. Collect from wet-seeded plants when fruits are extremely ripe. Whenever possible, seeds should be left to ripen *on the plant*.

Select seeds from plants that thrived and produced well to grow hearty plants that produce well. It’s important to save seed from more than one individual plant. Each individual plant carries specific genes, and as a seed saver you want to preserve all of that variety’s genetic diversity. To ensure you do this, try to save seed from the recommended population size – for self-pollinating plants, 10 plants is usually the recommendation, for cross-pollinating plants, you’ll need many more. Saving seed from fewer individuals can result in inbreeding and genetic bottlenecks, which will result in plants that lack vigor in subsequent generations.



## What Seeds Not to Save

The seed library will not accept hybrids and will be very cautious about putting cross-pollinating crops from amateur seed savers into the official collection. If you are trying to save and return cross-pollinating crops, you will need to describe in detail the method you used to isolate your crop if it is going to be entered back into our official collection (we put all “questionable” seed into our “Community Bin”).

## Cleaning Dry-Seeded Crops

- Separate seed from the chaff by stomping, rubbing, hitting, shaking, cracking and/or hanging with something to catch seed below
- Sort the seed from the chaff by using wind, screens and/or hand sorting

## Cleaning Wet-Seeded Crops

In all wet-seeded crops, seed needs to fully ripen in fruit, preferably on the plant. Usually, leave the fruit beyond edibility (with the exception of tomatoes and peppers). Don't include diseased fruit.

- Macerate pulp with seeds in a bucket, (if needed, add water to ensure seeds are not exposed to air), cover the bucket, and let stand a few days for the mixture to ferment
- Decant the liquid, and rinse the seeds under cool running water (easiest to do this in a wire sieve)

## Drying Seeds

Dry seeds by spreading them out on a clean, dry, *non-stick* surface away from heat sources and direct sunlight and let them air dry for about a week. Record seed information and keep with seed at all times so there's no mix-up.

## Storing Seeds

- Pack air-dried seeds in small paper packets, envelopes, plastic food storage bags, mason jars with tight fitting lids, or glass canisters with gasket lids
- Label them with plant name, date, and other information (see bullet points in Returning Seed above)
- Store dried seeds in a cool, dry place. Humidity and warmth shorten a seed's shelf life

## Germination Testing

Put your seeds in a moistened paper towel, put the paper towel in a plastic bag (do not seal). Let the seeds sit in their moist covering in your home for 1-2 weeks. Open and count the percentage of seeds that sprouted. This is your germ rate. Our project runs on volunteer energy and it is a huge drain on our resources to try to germ test all the seeds that come in (we've germ tested everything in our collection!). Please try to return your seeds with a germination test result. It helps us out immensely.

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/VictoriaSeedLibrary](http://www.facebook.com/VictoriaSeedLibrary)

**Email:** [vicseedlibrary@lifecyclesproject.ca](mailto:vicseedlibrary@lifecyclesproject.ca)

**Phone:** 250-383-5800

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# Victoria Seed Library

## Seed Steward Program

The Victoria Seed Library has identified a number of unique seed varieties in our collection that are well adapted to growing in our region and are rare or endangered. Losing these seeds from our freely available community collection would be a significant loss.

Each year we look for growers with at least a few seasons of gardening experience and 16 square feet of growing space to grow out one (or more!) varieties for us. Basically we give you a small package of seeds and you try to return us a larger package at the end of the year. This helps us “bulk up” our collection and ensure these seeds are preserved, so that they can continue to support our community’s health and long-term resilience. Don’t worry! We won’t give you the last of these seeds and we know things can happen...

We’re committing to work in community to identify and preserve those seeds that are ideally suited to feeding our community. Our seed steward program is a way to ensure we can preserve these seeds for our community for the long-term. As a small community of committed growers we can grow *the best* seed for our gardens here on Lekwungen and WSANEC territories.

### What You Get

- Seed to plant (at least 5x the commercially recommended minimum population size for that variety)
  - Enough seed from what you harvest for you to plant out over the next 2 years
- Mentorship from experienced seed growers
  - Invitations to attend seed study groups in local gardens and farms
  - Seed saving resources and advice

### What We Ask

- You make effort to plant the seed you are given during the appropriate window in the spring
- You tend 10-40 plants of each variety and let all of the flowers and fruits on that plant produce seed
- You allow that seed to ripen and then harvest, clean and return a portion back to us

### Sign Up

To register as a seed steward, please contact [vicseedlibrary@lifecyclesproject.ca](mailto:vicseedlibrary@lifecyclesproject.ca) or call LifeCycles at 250-383-5800 and speak with Matthew.

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