The Seed Library at KPU Langley

FAQs

Q. What does difficulty level mean?

A. Difficulty level refers to the ease of getting “true” seeds from a plant. Some plants are self-pollinators and harvesting “true” seeds from them is easy. If you are new to seed-saving, start here!

Other plants are cross-pollinators that are pollinated by wind or insects. Many plants in this category will cross with other plants in the same species and sometimes, the same family. This means that to get “true” seed from these plants, you need to isolate them from other plants that they may cross with or plan your plantings so that they flower at different times. Pollen from some plants will travel great distances in the wind, so it is a good to have an idea of what your neighbours are growing. We refer to these plants as intermediate.

Advanced level plants (like the Cucurbitaceae family) require strict isolation and/or hand pollination to get “true” seed. This may take some practice. (This is a very generalized explanation, for more info please see one of the websites/books on our resource list)

Easy, Intermediate, and Advanced:
☑ NOT ease of growing seeds
☑ NOT ease of collecting seeds
☑ ease of getting “true” seeds from the plant

Q. What does “true” seed mean?

A. “True” seed refers to harvested seed that is the same or very similar to the parent plant in appearance, growing habit, size, taste, etc.

Q. Is there a limit to how much seed I borrow?

A. There is no set number, but we ask that borrowers be considerate of all library users. With small seed, a pinch will usually provide you with more than enough seedlings. For larger seeds, please limit yourself to a few, and consider how big the plant gets, and how much it produces (one or two zucchini plants are often more than enough to feed your family, neighbours, etc.). If there is a circumstance
where you would like more seed for a particular reason (fava beans for green manure, or you want a good patch of corn), please contact us or ask a library staff member or librarian for assistance. In most cases, if we have ample inventory of that seed, it won’t be a problem – please remember to return an equivalent amount at the end of the season.

Q. How is the library organized?

A. The library is organized first by difficulty level, then by family name, then species, variety and so on. Some larger categories are sub-divided further i.e.: beans are divided by type (fava, bush, pole, soya). Use the master list or the library legend to locate the seeds you want.

Q. Why do you want so much information from me when I borrow, donate or return seed?

A. One of the goals of the seed library is to grow a collection of locally adapted, viable seed. We ask for details about the date the seed was harvested, location it was grown and any notes you might have, so that we can maintain a database that tracks the success of a given variety in the bioregion it was grown. Dates are important as seeds have a shelf-life. Some seeds will only give a high germination rate for the first couple of years; others will remain viable much longer if stored properly. Dates can also help determine why a plant did very poorly or exceptionally well by looking back at weather patterns from that year and region. We ask for your contact information so that we can email or call you to remind you to return borrowed seed and to communicate notices about the seed library or events. We appreciate it if you can fill out the forms in as much detail as possible. We will never give out your information, and we promise not to spam you.