

How to save seeds

We encourage you to save seeds from the plants you grow and donate them to Cairns Library. When you donate to our Seed Library you are helping other members of the community experience the joy of growing their own plants and food at home and create a collection of seeds suitable for local conditions.

Save seeds from the best plants

Once you have successfully grown your plants and enjoyed eating the produce, you need to choose at least two of the same variety to save seeds from. Use more than one plant for genetic diversity.

Choose the healthiest plants you have grown for seed saving which are 'truest' to that variety. Please do not donate hybrids. Think of the next gardener who expects to grow a reliable crop.

What to do with saved seeds

Place your dry, clean seeds in an airtight container. Seeds must be protected from heat, changes in temperature and humidity. Cairns Libraries provides appropriate seed storage conditions.

Cairns Libraries has free small plastic bags for you to place your seeds in. 10-20 seeds per packet.

Cairns Libraries has pre-printed and downloadable seed labels for you to use. It is very important to correctly label your seeds.

Seed saving method – Drying

Most plants require that their seeds are saved when the plant is dry. In the Cairns Libraries collection the following seeds must be dried:

Basil	Bean	Capsicum
Rocket	Parsley	Pea
Spinach	Sunflower	

The easiest option is to tie a fine mesh bag over the flower head and wait until the seeds drop into the bag.

Another option is to wait until the flower head is just about to release the seeds and cut the flower head off. Place the cutting in a small bucket or container and leave in a well ventilated spot until completely dry.

Need further information?

Contact your local Cairns Libraries branch,
or Contact Us on www.cairns.qld.gov.au/library

Remove all the stalks, leaves, pods and everything but the seeds themselves. A kitchen sieve is a good tool to use to remove larger chaff and catch seeds while allowing dust to fall through.

Seed saving method – Wet

Some plants must have the fleshy coating removed from them with water.

In the Cairns Libraries collection the following seeds must be saved using this method:

Cucumber:

Allow the fruit to fully ripen on the plant before picking it and scooping out the seeds. Use a small container of water to rinse the seeds and separate them from the pulp.

Spread the cleaned seeds onto a tray or fine mesh and allow them to dry for at least 2 weeks. Place seeds in a sunny position to dry where they will not be blown away by the wind or rained on.

Seed saving method – Fermentation

Some seeds must have the gel sac surrounding them removed.

In the Cairns Libraries collection the following seeds must be saved using this method:

Tomato

Crush the fruit and soak in a bowl, bucket or jar of water for at least 3 days. During this time the good seeds sink to the bottom while the flesh and skins float to the top. It is OK for a little mould to appear on the top. Tip the top layer off each day, leaving the seed at the bottom and topping up the water.

Spread the cleaned seeds onto a tray or fine mesh and allow them to dry for at least 2 weeks. Place seeds in a sunny position to dry where they will not be blown away by the wind or rained on.

Need more help?

For more information on growing plants from seed and seed saving please visit your Library.