



Garden Tips: Seed Inventory and Storage

We here at Grow Pittsburgh are already deep into planning for next year's season. Much of this work begins with taking some time to gather information and supplies from the past season, to set a foundation for the upcoming one.

One of the first aspects of planning for next season is doing a seed inventory. We also take this time to assess the crop varieties we've been growing. We're working on our standard crops master list for 2013, which we'll share on our website. It includes all of the crop varieties we've found to grow well in our urban settings. So keep an eye out for it in the coming weeks!

In the meantime, here are some basic tips for organizing and preserving your seed stores.

Seed Inventory

- Gather your leftover seeds from the past growing season.
- If the seeds have been properly stored (see "Seed Storage" section below), make a rough count – about how many are left?
 - Mark the number on the seed packet or in a notebook.
- If the seeds haven't been stored well or they are old, determine whether the variety is worth planting again.
 - Mark down any notable information in a notebook. Include information like:
 - Flavor
 - Whether the plant produced a good yield
 - Did you wish you had more or less of this crop?
 - Pest/disease problems
 - Growing habit – did the size/shape of the plant fit your space?
 - Weather or site conditions that could have affected production
- Assess the amounts of seed you have left and your notes to determine what seeds you need to source for the upcoming season.

Seed Storage

- Seed should be stored at low humidity and low temperatures.
 - Try storing seed in a sealed jar or plastic bag in the fridge or freezer.
- Seed stored at higher temperatures or humidity will rapidly lose its ability to germinate.
- Don't allow seed to sit in the sun – even for an hour or two!
- These seeds are typically only good for one year (even when stored correctly):
 - Onions (and scallions)
 - Parsley

- Chives
- The majority of seeds last around 3 years:
 - Beans
 - Beets
 - Brassicas (like broccoli, kale, arugula, radishes)
 - Chard
 - Corn
 - Lettuce
 - Peas
 - Peppers
 - Spinach
 - Squash
- And a few can last 5-10 years!
 - Cucumbers
 - Melons
 - Tomatoes

What if you are uncertain whether your seeds have been stored correctly, or how old they are? A [germination test](#) is a quick and easy way to determine what's really going on inside those seeds, and what percent of them is still viable. One final note – if seed is pelletized or treated, it will not last as long as its “naked” counterparts.