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# Saving Seeds From Your Pollinator Garden

SEEDS CAN BE COLLECTED FROM ALL TYPES OF FLOWERING PLANTS. PERENNIALS, BIENNIALS, ANNUALS – ANYTHING THAT MAKES A FLOWER, MAKES A SEED!

COLLECTING NATIVE SEED IS USEFUL FOR SOURCING LOCAL ECOTYPE PLANTS THAT MAY NOT BE COMMON IN CULTIVATION AND AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE ELSEWHERE. SAVING YOUR OWN SEED IS ALSO A COST EFFECTIVE WAY TO MAINTAIN YOUR POLLINATOR GARDEN, AND SHARING SEEDS WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS IS A WONDERFUL WAY TO BUILD COMMUNITY, CONNECTION, AND EXPAND POLLINATOR HABITAT TO NEW AREAS.

When the time comes to harvest seeds, follow these simple steps:

## STEP 1: IDENTIFY HARVESTABLE SEED

Seeds ripen and are ready for harvest all throughout the growing season. Observation is key – pay close attention to what's blooming and the seeds that follow.

**What to look for:** Deadened flowers, browned seedheads, plump seeds and/or seed pods (depending on the plant species).

Seeds can come in all shapes, sizes, and forms. Importantly, seeds should be 'ripe' when it comes time to harvest. Some seeds will continue to ripen after harvest while others will not (sunflowers will not continue to ripen on the counter, for example). Research your flowering plants to confirm appropriate harvest time.

## STEP 2: COLLECT

**Tools:** Gloves, garden snippers or pruners, container for collecting seeds (i.e., paper bags, recycled tupperware, small glass jars, etc.).

Clearly label your harvesting vessels with the variety of seed/s you intend to harvest. Some seeds can be easily removed from the seed head, where others are trickier to handle (like *Echinacea* sp.). In this case, snip off the entire seedhead and place it in a paper bag. Shake lightly until the seeds fall out.

**When harvesting from nature**, such as from roadsides or public parks, please be mindful of how much seed you take. *Do not take every seed you see*, and when in doubt, take only 5% or less of what's there. Leaving seeds allows for natural sowing and maintains crucial food sources for wildlife!

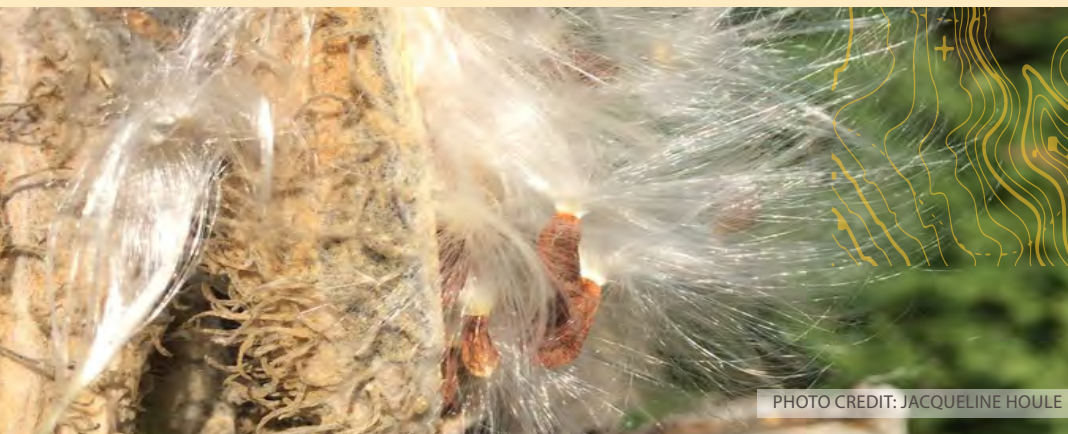


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## STEP 3: PROCESS YOUR SEED

### **Next, there are two options:**

1. Immediately spread your seed into a primed garden bed, sowing for the next season.
2. Air dry your seeds for long-term storage. To do so, spread your seeds, seedheads and/or seed pods into a shallow layer in a cardboard box or atop newspaper, leaving space inbetween the seeds. It can take between 1-4 weeks for seeds to completely dry.

**Cold stratification:** Many native plants to the U.S. from temperate areas need to go through a cold period prior to germination. Learn more about common species that require stratification and how to cold stratify your seeds [here](#).

## STEP 4: STORE AND SHARE

When your seeds have dried, sieve off any excess debris. Next, transfer seeds to labeled envelopes or jars for storage in a dry, cool environment, away from direct sunlight.

**Be sure to label seeds with plant name, date, and location collected**, e.g. 'my yard,' highway number, park name, etc. and the date collected. Don't accept seeds from others without this information as invasive species can be shared by mistake.

**Share your seeds with friends and neighbors, or keep them tidy until it's time to replenish or expand your garden next season!**

## SUPPORT INDIGENOUS SEEDKEEPERS!

Indigenous SeedKeepers are integral to conserving native and endemic plant species and preserving Native food sovereignty. Learn more about the [Indigenous SeedKeepers Network](#) and support their work today.

## JOIN THE GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE MOVEMENT!

Join the growing movement of people making a difference for wildlife where they live, work, learn, worship, and play. Visit [nwf.org/garden](http://nwf.org/garden).



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