



# Seed Sharing Guidelines



This is a reference for people bringing seeds to share at the seed library, a seed swap, as well as for the Seed Swap Check-in Table Volunteers.

Some people want specific varieties, while others are more interested in a species regardless of the variety. This second group is open to genetically diverse mixes. The most important thing is that seeds are labeled properly so that attendees have a positive experience with the seeds they plant. Here is a species-by-species list of seeds that should be clearly labeled and in some cases, not shared. The list is alphabetical by common name.

## Beets & Chard (*Beta vulgaris*)

### Question

- Did beets and chard flower at the same time?
  - *If yes, mark "Diverse mix of beets and chard."* These are the same species and will readily cross.

## Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Collards, Kale, & Kohlrabi (*Brassica oleracea*) These are all the same species and will readily cross.

### Questions

- Did you have more than one variety of any of the above OR two different vegetables from the above list flowering at the same time?
  - *If yes, mark "Diverse." The plants above are all the same species and will cross.*
- Did you save seeds from only one plant?
  - *If yes, discard seeds. They don't accept their own pollen, so the seeds are probably not viable.*
- Did you save seeds from a commercial hybrid?
  - *If yes, discard seeds because of probable male sterility genes.*





## Carrots (*Daucus carota* subsp. *sativus*)

### Questions

- Was Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*) growing and flowering within 800 m (half a mile) of your carrots?
  - *If yes, discard. Queen Anne's Lace and carrots are the same species. Queen Anne's Lace nearby can readily pollinate your carrots. The result will be that it could be woody and inedible like the wild relative.*
- Did you save seed from carrots that were commercial hybrids?
  - *If yes, discard. Many commercial carrot hybrids exhibit Cytoplasmic Male Sterility (CMS). In other words, these seeds could introduce sterility into the seed stock. The seeds may also not be viable.*
- Did you save from one variety only and from LESS than 50 plants?\*"
  - *If yes, discard. Carrots can easily inbreed. Saving from a small population can cause the edible carrots to revert to their woody wild relative - possibly even in one generation!*

\* If you allowed multiple carrot varieties to flower and saved seeds from those plants, you can save from as few as 5 plants assuming NO Queen Anne's Lace and NO commercial hybrids were present. Mark as "Diverse".

## Corn (*Zea mays*)

There are several types of corn (flint, dent, flour, popcorn, and sweet corn) that will readily cross-pollinate.

### Sweet Corn

Modern supersweet (sh2) varieties can cause unwanted starchy kernels when crossed with heirloom sweet corn. Therefore we recommend avoiding non-heirloom sweet corn contributions.

- Was the planted sweet corn labeled F1, supersweet, extra sweet, sh2, or triple sweet?"
  - *If yes, discard. Modern supersweet (sh2) varieties can produce starchy, unpalatable kernels when crossed with traditional corn varieties.*
- Did you grow more than one variety of heirloom sweet corn?
  - *If yes, write 'Diverse.'*



- Did you grow **sweet corn** within 60 m (200 feet) of any other type of corn?
  - *If yes, discard.* Sweet corn must be isolated from other corn types to maintain its sweetness and eating quality.
- Did you grow **popcorn** varieties within 60 m (200 ft) of non-popping corn varieties?
  - *If yes, discard, or add to a 'Diverse grain corn mix.'* Popcorn needs to be kept separate from other corn types to maintain its popping ability.
- Did you grow different types of flint, flour, or dent corn within 60 m (200 ft) of each other?
  - *If yes, mark it as 'Diverse grain corn mix.'* Flint, dent, and flour corn can be mixed if desired, but should be labeled as a diverse mix so growers know what to expect.

## **Cucumbers** (*Cucumis sativus*), **Melons** (*Cucumis melo*), & **Winter Squash** (*Cucurbita maxima and moschata*)

### **Questions**

- Did you hand-pollinate and tape the hand-pollinated flowers shut?
  - *If yes, write "hand pollinated". If no, write "Diverse".*
- Were there other varieties of that species growing within 30 m (100 ft).?
  - *If yes, write 'Diverse.'*

(Warning: See below under Squash section for *C. pepo* species.)

Diverse seeds may be a mix of what you planted and another variety nearby planted by a neighbor.

NOTE: Armenian cucumbers (*Cucumis melo*) are a different species from cucumbers (*Cucumis sativus*) and will not cross, but they can cross with melons (*Cucumis melo*).

## **Peppers** (*Capsicum annuum*)

All peppers of the same species will cross, including sweet bell peppers, hot peppers, and ornamental peppers.

### **Questions**

- Did you grow both sweet and hot peppers within 15 m (50 ft) of each other at the same time?



- *If yes, discard.* Sweet and hot peppers will cross-pollinate, resulting in unpredictable heat levels in the next generation. This can be dangerous for gardeners expecting sweet peppers.

- If you grew only sweet peppers, or only hot peppers, were different varieties of peppers growing within 15 m (50 ft) of each other?
  - *If yes, mark "Diverse Sweet Peppers" or "Diverse Hot Peppers".*

## Squash

There are 4 main species of squash and they don't cross in field settings: maxima, moschata, mixta, and pepo. For example, you can grow a Sweet Meat (maxima) next to a butternut (moschata) next to a courgette/zucchini (pepo) without crossing. [See a visual guide to identifying squash species.](#)

### WARNING!

If you grew **ornamental gourds** and any *C. pepo* (courgette/zucchini, acorn, spaghetti, delicata, summer squash or pumpkin),

### DO NOT SHARE THE SEEDS!

Reason: Ornamental gourds carry a gene that makes a bitter toxin that will make you sick! 🤢

If you taste bitterness in any squash, stop eating!

## Questions

- Did you hand-pollinate and tape the hand-pollinated flowers shut?
  - *If yes, write 'hand pollinated'. If no, write 'Diverse'.*
- Were there other varieties of that species growing within 30 m (100 ft.)?
  - *If yes, write 'Diverse.'*

Diverse seeds may be a mix of what you planted and another variety nearby.