



OPEN POLLINATED, HERITAGE SEEDS

Certified Organic

Seeds are the foundation of life, from fruits and vegetables to grain and livestock feed. Without them, we literally would have no food. When you save seeds, or purchase your seeds from someone who does, you're joining a chain of farmers, gardeners and seed enthusiasts that dates back to the Stone Age — our civilization literally arose due to seed saving. Think about it: early humans selected the best wild plants with which to feed themselves, and passed those varieties along to others by saving and sharing seeds.

The seed saving movement is growing. Communities are banding together to save and share heirloom and open pollination seeds that are in danger of disappearing off the face of the Earth as a result of industrialized agriculture and multinational corporations that control the majority of our seed supply. Seedy Saturday is part of a grassroots movement to ensure the preservation of heritage and biodiversity.

As a gardener, one of your more important decisions is whether to choose open-pollinated, hybrid or heirloom seed varieties — but which are best? For seed saving purposes, the most significant distinction among these types is saving true-to-type seed from open-pollinated and heirloom varieties, and avoiding hybrids.

Open-pollination seeds are pollinated by insects, birds, humans, wind or other natural mechanisms. Because there are no restrictions on the flow of pollen between individuals, open-pollinated plants are more genetically diverse. This can cause a greater amount of variation within plant populations, which allows plants to slowly adapt to local growing conditions and climate year-to-year. As long as pollen is not shared between different varieties within the same species, then the seed produced will remain **true-to-type**, year after year.

An **heirloom** (heritage) variety is a plant that has a history of being passed down multiple generations within a family or a community. An heirloom variety is by definition open-pollinated, but not all open-pollinated plants are heirlooms.

Hybridization is a controlled method of pollination in which the pollen of two different species or varieties is crossed (usually by human intervention, although it can happen in nature), usually from a desire to breed in a particular trait. Hybrids are typically unstable and less vigorous, producing fewer of those desirable traits with each passing year. However, hybrid seeds can be stabilized by open-pollination — by growing, selecting and saving the seeds over many seasons.

Choosing open-pollinated and heirloom seeds helps conserve genetic diversity and prevents the loss of unique varieties, including the ones that contribute to our long-term survival because of special hardiness and disease-resistance traits.

At *Thyme Again Gardens*, we have been meticulously saving our own seeds for more than 20 years. We select the most interesting and unique varieties, with special attention to our particular growing conditions and climate. The seeds we sell represent our most popular varieties.

For more information, check out the following references:

- ✓ *Open Sesame: The Story of Seeds (YouTube)*
- ✓ *Why Seed Saving is so Important (Dr. Mercola)*
- ✓ *Seed to Seed (Suzanne Ashworth)*
- ✓ *Sourcing Canadian Seeds (Seeds of Diversity)*