

Saving seed

After flowering, all plants produce seed. This is one way in which plants reproduce. Seed comes in many different types, shapes and sizes. Seeds are also spread in many ways.

Seeds in pods—when ripe, the pods such as those on Broom can explode and split open and the seeds shoot out.

Hooked seeds—tiny hooks on the seeds of plants such as stick to people's clothes and animal fur.

Fruit—some seeds like blackberries have a juicy covering. Birds and other animals eat the fruit and when seeds pass through the animals, they are deposited on the ground where they can start growing.

Winged seeds—these seeds, for example ash and sycamore have wings. Wind catches the wings and blows the seeds far and wide.

Seeds on parachutes—these are very light seeds with their own parachute to keep them in the air. Dandelion seeds and seeds of straw flower (*Helichrysum*) are examples of this.

By one method or another seeds get everywhere, which is why we often see plants growing in cracks in walls and in other out-of-the-way places, where no-one would have planted them.

It is easy to collect and save seeds when they are ripe. You can store them over winter and sow them the following spring. In this way you'll get a wide variety of free plants. If you swap seeds with friends and family you'll get an even greater range.

Saving the seed

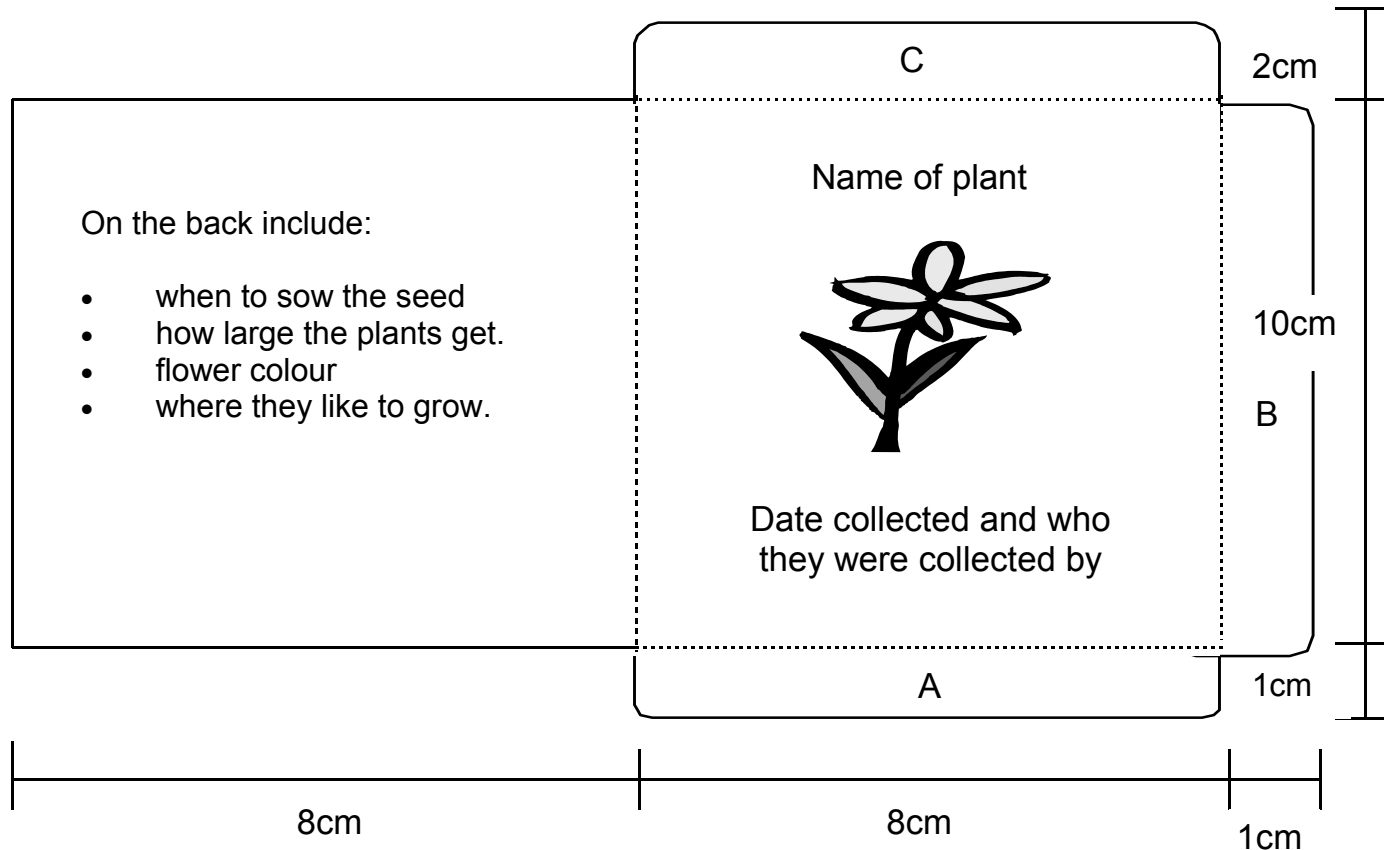
1. Look for ripe seeds. After flower-fall the seeds usually found at the base of the flower are likely to be green. The time to harvest the seed is when they turn brown.
2. Cut off the seed heads and put them into paper bags so they can finish drying.
3. Label each bag clearly with the plant name.
4. Leave the bags open so any moisture still present can evaporate.

5. Put the open bags in a warm dry place—an airing cupboard is ideal – until the seed pods are completely dry. You may need to split the pods and shake them to get all the seed out.
6. Blow all the casings away to clean the seeds.
7. Put each batch of seed in a paper envelope and label clearly. Don't use plastic or foil for wrapping. See the instructions on the back of this leaflet to make your own seed packets
8. Store over winter in an airtight container, such as an old clean coffee jar.
9. Early next spring find out when your seeds should be sown. You will find this information in gardening books.
10. Before sowing let the seeds rest for a few days, open to the air, to absorb some natural moisture.

Make your own seed packets

You need a piece of card or brown paper that measures at least 18cm x 15cm.

1. Use the template below to draw your seed packet outline.



2. Cut out your template, then make folds along the dotted lines.
3. Stick tabs A and B to the back of the packet.

4. Stick or draw a picture of your plant on to the front of the packet. Include information about the plant on the front and back of your packet.
5. Once the packet has dried, place your collected seed inside.

6. Stick down tab C to seal the packet.
7. Store in an airtight container.

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A guide to saving seed



Garden Organic
for Schools