



WHO WE ARE

Whitchurch Seedsavers are a newly-formed local network group, based around the Whitchurch-on-Thames, Whitchurch Hill, Pangbourne and Purley-on-Thames geographic area.

The idea is simple - members will save vegetable seeds from crops grown in their gardens or allotments. Next February, we shall hold our first 'Seed Swap' where we can share our saved seeds between members, who will then grow them on in 2012, and so on.

The aim of the group is to build up a truly living seed-bank of vegetables that will be genetically adapted to our local environment, and will be independent of the big seed companies.

HOW TO BEGIN

If you would like to join the group and start seed-saving:-

- ❖ Decide what crop you want to save seed from - beans, peas, tomatoes, some brassicas, spinach, leeks, carrots, parsnips are all good for beginners
- ❖ Obtain your seed (must NOT be F1 hybrid) - we recommend The Real Seed Catalogue and The Organic Gardening Catalogue
- ❖ Sign up with 'Whitchurch Seedsavers' and ask for the seed-saving factsheet for your crop
- ❖ Keep careful notes about the variety planted and its characteristics
- ❖ Harvest, save & store your seed
- ❖ Come to the first Seed Swap!

If you would like to join this group (no subscription) or just find out more, please get in touch with Sally Woolhouse on 01189844365 or sally.woolhouse@homecall.co.uk

WHY WE SHOULD SAVE OUR OWN SEED

Until recently, every gardener in the world saved their own seed. And every gardener was, therefore, a plant breeder. They simply saved the seed of the plants that did best for them, and which they liked most. Although simple, this was efficient. Each gardener was maintaining a slightly different strain of each vegetable, and this made for a huge living genebank that was very resilient against disease or climate change.

This has worked very well for the past 11,000 years. Every year, without even thinking about it, millions of people added to the achievements of their ancestors to maintain and improve the previous years' varieties. Because their seed was real, open-pollinated seed, every seed was a bit different, so it was widely adapted, but also adaptable - it could cope with all sorts of change. Now, we have thrown this all away.

In the past 40 years, almost all these adaptable local strains have been lost. Gardeners have forgotten how to save their own seed. They are sold hybrids, where every seed is identical, in every packet, year after year - no adaptability for different soils, or for changes in climate over time. And because these hybrid seeds are all the same in every field in every country, people have to bludgeon the environment into some sort of 'standard' growing medium with fertilisers and chemicals, to grow their standardised seeds.

Should the climate change, or the supply of cheap oil (to make all these chemicals) dry up, then these hybrids will do badly, and there will be no real seeds left to breed from. *(text above, courtesy of The Real Seed Catalogue website)*

So, this is the 'green' and altruistic reason for saving seeds and swapping amongst other like-minded enthusiasts; but it should also be fun, save you money and extend your knowledge of vegetable-growing - give it a try!!