



**Nurture Nature Center**, located in Easton, Pennsylvania, created an Urban Garden in a small parking area using recycled and found materials to demonstrate low-cost growing techniques for small urban areas (walls, balconies, small paved spaces). This fact sheet is part of a series that features information about demonstrations in the garden that are easy to replicate and implement in a variety of urban spaces.

## Seed Saving in the Garden

### Description:

Why do gardeners save seed? Some sow seed saved from their hardiest plants year after year so a variety will become better adapted to their unique conditions. Others do it to save money. Still others save seeds of favorite varieties because seed companies don't carry them. And then there are those who just like the challenge.

### To Save or Not to Save

The easiest seeds to save are those from open-pollinated (non-hybrid) annual plants. Fortunately there are many to choose from: lettuce, spinach, arugula, tomatoes, peppers, beans, dill, zinnias, marigolds, sunflowers, and nasturtiums are just a few. Biennials such as parsley, kale, and foxglove need to be left in the garden over the winter in order to produce seed in their second year. Individual plants that have desirable attributes, such as strong growth, early fruiting, or late bolting, are the best candidates for seed saving.

Avoid collecting the seeds of hybrid plants. Although they will probably be viable, they may or may not be desirable. Another plant type that poses seed-saving difficulties is squash. Bees roam freely from one cucurbit variety to another—which may include inedible gourds, summer zucchini, winter butternuts, ornamental pumpkins, and more. This means you could have unwanted cross-pollination, and unpredictable results.

For more information related to Nurture Nature Center's Urban Garden Project, see <http://nuturenaturecenter.org/garden/>

### Resources:

<http://www.seedsavers.org/Education/Seed-Saving-Resources/>  
<http://umaine.edu/publications/2750e/>



### Five Easy Seed-Saving Crops:

**Beans** generally self-pollinate, so there's little danger of unwelcome surprises.

**Peas** are equally easy, especially if you grow just one variety.

**Lettuce** produces prolifically. One stalk can make 30,000 seeds.

**Tomatoes** don't often cross-pollinate, but to be safe plant the variety you plan to save 25 feet away from other varieties.

**Flowers:** Seeds of zinnias, marigolds, nasturtiums, morning glories, larkspur, and others can be collected as they mature.

