

# The Garden \$aver

## Keep those seeds!

Many times, you'll find yourself with leftover seed. Maybe it's because you've saved seed of a variety that you really like. Maybe you just had too much seed to use during the growing season. The good news is that seed can be saved for next season (or longer) by following some simple rules.

1. Keep seed in a sealed, airtight container.
2. Store in a consistently cool and dry location - avoid garages or unheated rooms.
3. Use the refrigerator or freezer for longer-term storage.

Not all seed is the same. This chart shows how long certain seeds can last under ideal storage conditions.

| Vegetable Seed  | Storage Time |
|---|--------------|
| <i>Leek, Lettuce, Okra, Onion, Parsley, Parsnip, Peppers, Spinach, Sweet Corn, Swiss Chard</i>  | 1-2 years    |
| <i>Beans (bush &amp; pole), Beets, Carrots, Collard Greens, Celery, Cucumber, Melons, Peas, Squash,</i>                                   | 2-3 years    |
| <i>Asparagus, Brussels Sprouts, Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Eggplant, Kale, Kohlrabi, Pumpkin, Radish, Tomato, Turnip, Watermelon</i> | 3-4 years    |
| Flower Seed   |              |
| <i>Annuals</i>  | 1-3 years    |
| <i>Perennials</i>   | 2-4 years    |

Sources: Oregon State University Extension, Colorado State University Extension.

When it comes time to plant older seed, sow seed a little thicker than normal. This will help ensure a good stand with each variety.

## Tool time

As the gardening season winds down and winter draws near, give your garden tools a tune-up. Moisture and left over, crusted on soil are essential ingredients to shortening the life of tools. By following a few simple steps, you will save time and money in the long run.

1. Remove dirt and other residues from tools. Use a metal brush if needed. Rinse and dry them after each use.
2. Store tools inside and use simple racks to keep them off of the ground. This will help reduce exposure to weather conditions that can rust metal, splinter wood handles, and weaken fiberglass.
3. Apply linseed oil to rejuvenate wood handles and keep rust at bay on metal surfaces.
4. Drain and coil garden hoses for indoor storage.

By taking care of your tools now, you can get straight to gardening once the winter thaw begins.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Bill McKelvey**

Grow Well Missouri

[Mckelveywa@missouri.edu](mailto:Mckelveywa@missouri.edu)

<http://foodsecurity.missouri.edu>

T: 573-882-4973

## Move crops around the garden

Crop rotation is a time honored tradition and leads to better garden yields. Simply plant similar vegetables (those in the same family) in *different* spots each year. For example, instead of planting your tomatoes in the same spot year after year, move them around so they are in the same spot once every three or more years.

Why rotate your crops?

- It reduces the build-up of pests and disease.
- It recharges soil nutrients.
- It reduces soil compaction.

Crop rotations will be most successful if garden plans are made and reviewed from year to year. With small gardens, proper crop rotations may not be possible. The idea is to do your best with the space available.

### Know your plant family!

It helps to know the major plant families when planning a crop rotation. Plants in the same family generally have similar growing requirements. They also attract the same pests and diseases. Keep this in mind when rotating your plants.

**Legume family:** all varieties of beans and peas.

**Goosefoot family:** beets, spinach and Swiss chard.

**Mustard family:** broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, radish and turnip.

**Parsley family:** carrot, dill and parsley.

**Nightshade family:** eggplant, pepper, potato and tomato.

**Gourd family:** cantaloupe, cucumber, honeydew, pumpkin, summer/winter squash and watermelon.

**Lily family:** garlic, leek and onion.

A few crops have their own plant family. These include lettuce (composite family), sweet corn (grass family), okra (mallow family) and sweet potato (morning glory family).

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## Taste it at home!

In addition to tasting good, sweet potatoes are good for you. In our opinion, the best recipes avoid added sugar and allow the natural sweetness to shine through. Two simple ways to prepare them make use of the microwave or oven.

### Microwave Sweet Potatoes

*(For one sweet potato at a time. Increase cooking times by a few minutes if cooking more than one).*

ALL YOU DO:

- Rinse and scrub sweet potatoes. Don't peel them before cooking.
- Poke a few holes in them with a fork.
- Microwave on high for 4 minutes on a plate or paper towel.
- Turn sweet potato over.
- Microwave on high for another 4 minutes.
- Test for doneness by poking with a fork. It should slide in easily.
- Split open and peel if desired. Mash and top with your favorite condiments.

### Roasted Sweet Potatoes

ALL YOU DO:

- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Rinse and scrub sweet potatoes. Leave peels on.
- Chop sweet potatoes into similar sized chunks (about 1 ½-inch chunks).
- In a bowl, toss sweet potatoes with oil (olive or vegetable), spices (e.g. pepper, paprika, thyme, rosemary, garlic powder, or spice mix), salt to taste, and chopped onion or garlic, if you prefer.
- Spread evenly on a baking sheet.
- Check and turn the pieces over after 20 minutes. Bake for 40 minutes or until tender.

