

### Plant Cold Hardiness Fruit for Better Results

With the recent downturn in the economy many local garden centers have seen an increased interest from customers wanting to store vegetable seeds in case of an unforeseen emergency. If you are planning to do so, there are several things to keep in mind so that you can have success. These include: storing seeds properly to maximize shelf life and viability, purchasing the correct type of seed and learning how to start seed indoors and in the garden.

The most important factors determining how long vegetable seeds will last are temperature and humidity. Cooler temperatures and low humidity encourages longer shelf life. Several companies actually market vacuum-packed seed, which if kept frozen, will last for up to twenty years. However, it is wise to use the seed more frequently than this.

Another aspect to consider is if it is worth harvesting your own seed from garden plants. This was done in the past when seed was not readily available from stores. However, it is easier and more time efficient to just buy extra seed and store it. Many plants have lifecycles that makes it very inconvenient to harvest seed. Cleaning and separating it from the plant can also be a challenge.

Another issue that can be confusing is whether to use open-pollinated or hybrid seed. Open pollinated seed come back as the same variety from year to year; whereas hybrid seed will either be sterile or not come back as the same variety when replanted. Some advantages to hybrid plants is that they generally have higher yields and are more disease resistant. They are also the most common type of seed available at local garden centers.

A final thing to consider is timing seed planting to maximize the amount you can produce. In Cache Valley, the first week of June is traditionally when warm season crops can be placed in the garden. But if you are not planning on purchasing transplants from the garden center, it is wise to know what can be sewn directly into the garden and what must be started up to several weeks earlier. An example of this includes many varieties of tomatoes and peppers. It is not hard to start them indoors but it is not wise to wait for an emergency to learn to do so.