

## Tips for Buying Garden Seeds

It is still winter, but those who like to start their own indoor plants or want to have a supply of seeds available are already purchasing. For many, choosing seeds is enjoyable and includes browsing through catalogs, online searches and trips to garden centers. For those unfamiliar with the process, purchasing seeds can be daunting.

To make seed purchasing easier, whether starting them indoors or outside, several things should be considered. One is whether to purchase open pollinated or hybrid seeds. Open pollinated means that when seeds are collected from a plant and are later replanted, the resulting plants will maintain the same characteristics as the parent. Because of this, many feel that if an emergency were to arise and seeds could not be purchased from a garden store, open pollinated seeds are more reliable since they can potentially be collected and replanted. However, collecting seeds from many plants requires preplanning and knowledge of how and when to remove them and how to process the seeds for use in future years.

Opposite of open pollinated seeds, seeds collected from hybrid plants that are later replanted result in new plants that have differing and often diminished characteristics, or seeds will not germinate at all. Keep in mind that yields from hybrid varieties are usually greater than open pollinated types and hybrid plants are often more disease resistant.

One suggestion in preparing for an emergency is to purchase enough seeds to last several years and restock when seeds are available. Cycle the seeds using the oldest first. When stored in a cool, dry location, seeds remain viable for at least 3-5 years. Using this cycling method, it is not as important to collect seeds from open pollinated varieties, and the worry of using hybrid seeds is diminished. For those that want to go a step further, most vegetable seeds can be stored in a sealed container in the freezer. Using this method, seeds can remain viable for 10 to 20 years. However, it is probably best to use the seeds or replace them before this period of time. For further information pertaining to storing seeds access the following fact sheet:  
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/Pubs/Garden/07221.html>.

For those who are interested in starting seeds indoors, supplies can be purchased from many local garden centers. Seeds should be started in a sunny window or within 6 inches of florescent lights. Recent research at USU has shown that regular florescent bulbs statistically perform as well as more expensive grow-lights. Temperatures where seeds are started should be at least 70 F. In Cache Valley, many cool-season crops can be planted outside by the first or second week in April. Without protection, warm-season crops can be planted outside in late May or early June. For detailed information about starting seeds indoors, access the following fact sheet:  
[www.njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/download-free.asp?strPubID=FS787](http://www.njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/download-free.asp?strPubID=FS787).