

Q: Can I save seeds from produce in my garden now. Do I have to wait until the squash or cubes turn yellow? This year seeds were scarce and pricy. – J.W. in NE Tennessee

A: Yes, you can save seeds from this year's garden for next year. You are correct that seeds are scarce (and consequently more expensive) this year. All the more reason to start saving those seeds!

As you harvest, let one or two of the squash or cucumber fruits stay on the vine to ripen. Once the fruit have ripened completely, harvest the seeds from these fruits and let them dry out. Store your harvested seeds in a cool and dry location in an airtight container. An option is to use a glass canning jar as a container and store in the freezer. Don't forget to label the container with the name of the vegetable seeds. Note, if you gather seeds from hybrid plants, you might get a different variety of fruit than you expected. This is especially true with tomato seeds from hybrid varieties.

If you have had your seeds stored for a while you may want to do a test germination of past years' seeds to make sure they will grow in your upcoming season.

Check this useful website that has details on how to help you save your vegetable garden seeds: <https://www.seedsavers.org/how-to-save-seeds>. Good luck and thanks for the question! Please email us again if you have any more questions. – Your Friendly Master Gardener

Did you know that the Tennessee State Flower is the *Iris sp.*, also known as the Beardless Iris, and that the Tennessee State Fruit is the *Lycopersicon lycopersicum*, also known as the Tomato?

The Master Gardener Program is offered by the University of Tennessee Extension. The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to train people as horticultural-educated volunteers. These volunteers work in partnership with the local Extension office in their counties to expand educational outreach, providing home gardeners with researched-based information.