

Saving Lettuce Seeds

By John Ditchburn

Lettuces are one of the easiest vegetables to save seeds from as the seeds readily separate from their heads and will stay true to type, meaning that the saved seeds will produce plants exactly like their parent plant. This is how I save my lettuce seeds.

1. Select one or two of the best lettuce plants that you want to save seeds from
2. Place a stake next to each lettuce in readiness for when the lettuce goes to seed.
3. Attach a label to the stake with the name of the variety of lettuce.
4. As the lettuce begins to go to seed tie it to the stake.



LEFT: Maturing lettuce plant that has been staked and labelled. RIGHT: Lettuce seed heads that are ready to harvest.

5. When around 50% of the heads have formed pappi (white fluffy tops) cut the stems, place in a paper bag and hang them up to dry for two or three weeks.



Placing the cut stems in a paper bag and hanging them up to dry. Make sure you label the bag so you don't forget what variety of lettuce you have saved.

6. Remove the stems from the paper bag and strip the heads from the stems by running your hand down the stems over a large shallow bowl.



7. Crush the seed heads with your hands to break them open and remove the larger pieces of head and stems.

8. Swirl the bowl around in a circular fashion. This will concentrate the mixture in centre with the lighter detritus on top and the heavier seeds below.

9. With your mouth close to the bowl gently blow air over the detritus at an angle. This will blow the lighter detritus out of the bowl. Repeat steps 8. and 9. until you only have seeds left.



10. Package and label your seeds and store in a cool dry place. For more detailed instructions on how to save lettuce seeds see: [Saving Lettuce Seeds](#) on the [urbanfoodgarden.org](#) website.