

HOW TO COLLECT & GET LETTUCE SEEDS

BY [AMY ANDRYCHOWICZ](#) | [39 COMMENTS](#)

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Harvesting lettuce seeds is easy, fun, and frugal. In this post, I will tell you when and how to collect and save lettuce seeds from your garden, including step by step instructions.



Collecting lettuce seeds is a great way to save yourself some money, and keep your favorite varieties for years to come.

One of the most rewarding tasks in my garden is [harvesting seeds](#) to plant next year, and lettuce is one of my favorites.

If you get into the habit of gathering lettuce seeds every year, you'll never need to buy them again. You'll also be able to share with friends, or trade them for other seeds.

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HARVESTING LETTUCE SEEDS FROM YOUR GARDEN

ABOUT AMY ANDRYCHOWICZ

I'm an author and expert gardener who loves growing ALL of the plants. From vegetables, herbs, and flowers to cacti, succulents, tropicals, and houseplants - you name it, I've grown it! My green thumb comes from my parents, and I've been gardening for most of my life. [Read More...](#)



COMMENTS

Irene B says

I haven't seen many pollinators around in our area lately (Brisbane City, Australia) ... so, do I need to hand pollinate my lettuce flowers with a fine paint brush – individually – or can lettuce flowers 'self-pollinate' simply by vibrating the flower stems, like is the case for tomato flowers? (I suppose what I'm really asking is whether lettuce flowers are 'perfect flowers' with both male and female parts)

REPLY

Amy Andrychowicz says

Yes, lettuce is self pollinating.

REPLY

Diane Uhls says

So do I need to wait till the yellow flowers turn white? They seem to be taking forever. I have a lot of yellow flowers and just got about 10 white flowers. It seems like a 4 month process.

Some of the yellow flowers are falling off – so there is no seed to get from them ?

REPLY

pretty, if you ask me).



My lettuce plants going to seed

WHEN DOES LETTUCE GO TO SEED

As many gardeners already know, heat is what triggers bolting. Once that starts to happen, it takes several weeks before lettuce seeds are mature enough to harvest.

I usually collect lettuce seeds sometime in late summer or early fall here in my Minnesota garden. But, it might happen earlier for you, depending on where you live.

WHERE DO LETTUCE SEEDS COME FROM?

They form inside of the flower heads. Once the blossoms start to fade, the heads will eventually turn yellow or brown.

Shortly after that, white puffs will form on top (similar to a dandelion). The seeds are located at the bottom of each of these white puffs.





Mature lettuce seeds ready to collect

HOW MANY SEEDS DOES A LETTUCE PLANT PRODUCE?

One lettuce plant can produce hundreds of seeds. To get the maximum number from each plant, be sure to check the pods daily and harvest them as they mature.

Otherwise they will blow away in the wind if you wait too long, which means you won't be able to collect as many.

WHEN TO HARVEST LETTUCE SEEDS

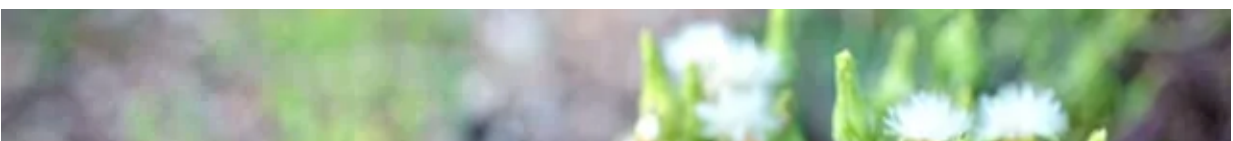
You'll know it's time to harvest lettuce seeds when the flower head turns yellow, or dries out, and the white cotton puffs come out around the top.

If you're still unsure, gently tug at one of the white puffs. If they are ready, the seeds will come out with very little effort.

WHAT DO THE SEED PODS LOOK LIKE

Well, technically speaking, lettuce plants don't really form seed pods. Instead, the seeds are located inside of the flower head.

Though, once they are filled with seeds, the dried flowers do look very much like oval-shaped pods.





Lettuce flowers starting to set seed

WHAT DO LETTUCE SEEDS LOOK LIKE

Lettuce seeds are small, flat, and oval shaped, with slightly pointy tips. They can vary in color anywhere from black, to dark grayish-brown, to almost white – depending on the variety.

WHAT TO DO WITH LETTUCE SEEDS AFTER COLLECTING

Once you're done collecting lettuce seeds from the garden, you need to separate them from the chaff and dry them before storage.

HOW TO SEPARATE LETTUCE SEEDS FROM CHAFF

Once you get them inside, break apart the flower heads to remove the seeds inside. They will usually fall out easily, but you may need to use your fingernail to remove a few.

Regardless of how you harvested them, lettuce seeds tend to have a lot of chaff (i.e.: flower head pieces and other debris) mixed in. It can be difficult to get rid of all of it.

But don't worry, a little bit of chaff won't affect the ability to save or grow them. Pick out the largest pieces of debris, and do the best you can to separate the seeds from the smaller bits.





Separating lettuce seeds and chaff

HOW TO DRY LETTUCE SEEDS

It's important to allow lettuce seeds to dry completely before saving them. That way, you will avoid any potential molding.

To do that, simply lay them out on a dry surface, where they will be protected from any type of wind. Let them air dry for at least a week, and you're good.

Related Post: [How To Grow Lettuce At Home](#)

HOW TO SAVE LETTUCE SEEDS FOR NEXT YEAR

You can plant your freshly harvested lettuce seeds right away, or save them for next year. There are lots of options for storing them.

Try organizing them in [pocket sheets](#) that you can keep in a [3-ring binder](#). Or seal them in [small envelopes](#), and put them into [a cute box](#).

You could even [make your own DIY seed envelopes](#) for keeping them organized, or sharing them with friends. [Learn all about the right way to store seeds here](#).

HOW LONG DO LETTUCE SEEDS LAST?

If you keep them in a dark, cool location where they are protected from moisture, lettuce seeds can last 3-4 years. So you can save them for the long term.

However, I always recommend collecting lettuce seeds every 1-2 years in order to keep your stash fresh. That will give you the best results.

Harvesting lettuce seeds is incredibly simple once you know what to look for. Plus, it is so much fun to gather your own lettuce seeds each year. You'll never have to rely on the garden center to buy them again.

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Otherwise, if you just want a quick-start intro, or need a quick refresher about how to start seeds indoors, then my [Seed Starting Indoors eBook](#) would be perfect for you!

Up Next: [Learn how to grow lettuce from seed here.](#)

MORE POSTS ABOUT SAVING SEEDS

- [How To Harvest & Save Radish Seeds](#)
- [How To Save Pea Seeds From Your Garden](#)
- [How To Harvest & Save Bean Seeds](#)

Share your tips for harvesting lettuce seeds in the comments section below!



How To **HARVEST LETTUCE SEEDS** From Your Garden



STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS

HOW TO HARVEST LETTUCE SEEDS

The best part of harvesting lettuce seeds is that it doesn't take much time, and you don't need any special skills or equipment to get it done! Here's what you'll need, and how to do it.

MATERIALS

- [Plastic bowl](#)
- [Baggie](#)
- [Paper bag](#)
- OR small bucket

TOOLS

- [Precision pruning shears](#)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Choose your collection container** - I find it easier to use a small [plastic bowl](#) or bucket for harvesting lettuce seeds. But you could certainly use a [paper bag](#) or a [baggie](#), if that's what you have on hand.
2. **Pinch out the cotton puffs** - Gently pinch the entire cotton puff between your fingers, and then pull it out. The seeds are attached to the ends of the white stuff, and should come out easily if they are mature.



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3. **Drop the seeds into your container** - Carefully drop the seeds into your collection container. Take care not to breathe on them, or move the container too fast, or they could blow away. Repeat with as many of the pods as you want, until you've collected the desired amount of lettuce seeds.
 4. **Bring them inside** - Take your container or paper bag inside the house to prepare the seeds for storage.

NOTES

- I recommend collecting your lettuce seeds on a windless day. Otherwise they could blow away, since they are so lightweight.
- Rather than pinching each seed pod one by one, sometimes it's easier to off the entire flower cluster. Use a sharp pair of [precision pruners](#) to cut the entire flower head, and drop it into your bucket or bag.

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Amy Andrychowicz says

Yes, you need to wait until your lettuce flowers have white puffs on them, that means the seeds are mature and ready for picking. If they fall off, that means they weren't pollinated, so there won't be any seeds in those.

REPLY

Stan de Riel says

Enjoy them as they try to bolt. They get bitter from production of compounds which, in addition to "milky" latex, include reportedly soporificants— they make you sleep well and calm you down. But don't eat all the leaves, leave plenty to support the bloom and seed production. Also, mark your lettuces, and seed-save from those with desirable domestic leaf forms. Plants reverting to wild type (narrow leaves) — just eat them up. This assumes you have open-pollinated lettuce.

REPLY

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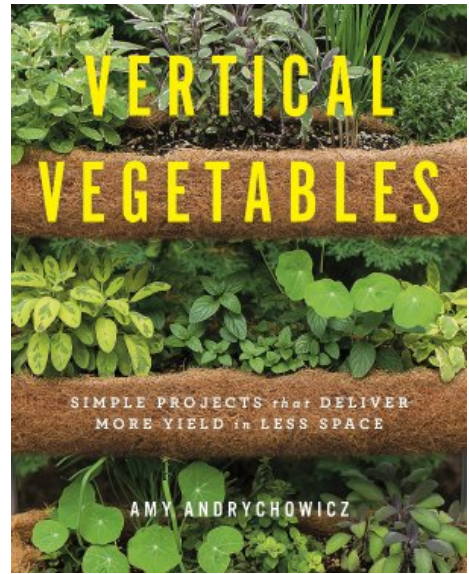
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MEET AMY!

Amy Andrychowicz is an author, and the creator of Get Busy Gardening. She is devoted to helping new gardeners learn through guidance, encouragement, and

advice that is easy to understand.

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