

HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN TO HARVEST OUR SEEDS?

LETTUCE

Towards the end of harvest season a lettuce plant will send up a tall flower spike. The small flowers at the top of the spike will eventually turn into seeds over a couple of weeks. Individual seed heads will ripen at different times so wait until about half the flowers of each plant have gone to seed. Cut the top off the plant and shake the seeds into a bag or bowl or rub them between your fingers to release them.



Lettuce flower spikes make the plant look very different!



Some flower heads, some seed heads



Seeds being shaken from the stalks and the final tiny seeds!

BEAN

Allow the bean pods to dry and turn brown, about six weeks after the eating stage. If there is the potential for frost, pull up the entire plant and hang it in a cool, dry location until the pods are brown and dry.

Small numbers of pods can simply be opened by hand and the seeds rubbed or picked out. This can actually be a very relaxing late fall outdoor activity! For those with a need for speed, challenge them to pick out as many seeds as possible in a minute

If there are a large number of seeds they can be put in a bag and shaken or rubbed to dislodge the seeds inside.



Dried beans hanging on the plant and still attached to their pods



Separating the beans from the dried pods!

RADISH

Radish seed stalks can grow surprisingly large and bushy. The seed pods dry to a pale brown. The stalks can be cut down when the pods and stems are dry and crispy. Pods can be picked off the stems individually when dry, cracked open by hand or crushed individually, and the seeds picked out. If you have a large number you can even try putting them in a bag and gently crushing them under your feet to crack open the pods.



Radish flowers still blooming and a few seed pods in development on the same plant



Dried seed pods on and off the plant



Dried seeds picked out of the pods

PEA

Harvest the peas when the pods turn yellow or brown and the peas rattle inside. This will occur about one month after the fresh eating stage. Some pods can be opened by hand, some shaken out. If not completely dry, pull up the whole plant and hang it upside down to dry indoors.



Dried pods are papery and brown



Seeds picked out of a dried pod

SUNFLOWER

Sunflowers seeds are usually ready for harvesting when most of the petals are dry and they drop their heads. To harvest the seeds, you can hang the harvested flower heads upside down inside to dry. Remove the seeds from the head by rubbing your hand over the face of the flower.

Visits from birds are a good indication that the seeds are ripe! If birds are a real problem, consider tying a paper or plastic bag around a few flower heads in order to protect the seeds.



Sunflower nearing the end of the summer



Seeds ready for harvesting. Pick out by hand or scrape the seeds off with a spoon