



Tomato Seed Saving

For the home gardener

Your goal is to eliminate the jelly sac that surrounds each seed – this sac has germination inhibitors in it, so it needs to be removed. Fermentation will remove the sac!

1. **Harvest & Select Best Tomatoes** – Make sure they are:
 - a. Only from 1 tomato variety (type) at a time
 - b. Fully ripe
 - c. Disease free
2. **Remove seeds** – Cut open tomato(s) and begin “scooping” out the seeds and juice into a container. Notice the jelly sacs around each seed.
3. **Cover jar** – Once you’ve squeezed all the seeds out of a particular variety, transfer seeds to a clear cup or jar and cover with a cloth to keep out flies. *Do not add water to the jar, as this may induce germination.
4. **Set Aside to Ferment** – Place container at room temperature to ferment. The rate of fermentation will depend on the temperature where the container is kept, ranging anywhere from 12 hours to three days – if it’s warmer, it goes quicker!
5. **Check Seeds Daily** – The goal of fermentation is to remove the jelly sac from around the seeds. Stir seeds vigorously and allow them to settle – ready seeds without jelly sacs will sink to the bottom. Then to check the seeds further, take a few seeds and press them between your fingers. If the jelly sac is intact, the seeds will squirt out of your fingers. When the sac is gone you will be able to press a single seed between two fingers without it squirting out. As soon as the jelly sac is gone, proceed to the next step. Don’t over-ferment the seeds!
6. **Clean Seeds by Decanting** – ONLY when the seeds are ready, add water. The denser, clean, viable seeds will sink to the bottom, while the lighter, “bad” seeds plus pulp will rise to the top – pour off the discard material from the top to leave the good seeds remaining on the bottom. This is called *decanting*, and will need to be repeated multiple times to get rid of all of the pulp and leave you with clean seeds for saving.
7. **Dry Seeds** – Pour clean seeds into a screen colander (or window screen). Use a gentle water spray to disperse the seeds so that they are only 1 layer thick and place in a well ventilated location to dry.