


A gardening glossary for the backyard grower 

Time spent learning your own home soil can often be quite humbling. For us too! We're reminded regularly that there is always something left to learn. We will continue to update as more vocabulary comes to light. Be sure to leave us a note in the comments if there's a word or two you know should be on this list!

AAS Winner: All-America Selections. AAS winners are new, previously unsold varieties chosen for their proven garden performance: 'Tested Nationally and Proven Locally™' See AAS winners sold by Pinetree [here](#).

Blight: A plant disease caused by fungi that results in sudden wilting or dying of affected parts.

Bolting: When a plant goes quickly to 'seed' - a survival mechanism that fast tracks the plants growth to produce seed as quickly as possible skipping over the vegetable/fruit production. It's usually a result of temperatures getting too hot for the plant to continue to produce.

Damping off: Occurs when a pathogen (bacteria, virus, or other microorganism) that thrives on too-wet conditions is able to grow and kill the seeds before they can emerge - affects germination but can occur after seedlings have sprouted. Usually the result of contaminated containers, soil or improper watering.

Days to Maturity: The time from when the seed has been transplanted, (or first sprouting if directly sown) to when the plant begins to flower, set fruit or begin to harvest (vegetables). Some definitions of first counted day may vary, check with your provider.

Deciduous: A plant that annually, or at a regular interval of development, sheds their leaves - Trees and Shrubs whose leaves fall off in winter are *deciduous*.

Determinate: Plants with a growing limit; they grow to one height and start setting their flowers and fruit all at once - smaller plants, good container varieties.

Drainage: The natural or artificial process through which water moves through soil.

Drought Resistance: A plant's ability to survive with no water for long periods of time.

Drought Tolerance: A plant's ability to survive with little water for limited periods of time.

Frost Date (First/Last): The average date of the first freeze in fall and last light freeze in spring. Keep in mind these dates have shifted considerably over the past few years. Be sure to check your local predicted frost dates when planning your garden.

Germination: The first stages of development for a plant; from seed to seedling - where it breaks through the seed shell and begins the growing process.

GMO: Genetically modified organism; an organism (i.e. a seed) that has been altered using engineered techniques; changed in a way that is NOT naturally occurring.

Habit: Characteristics and growth type of a particular plant; climbing, clump forming, trailing, etc..

Hardiness Zone: A geographic area grouped by climatic conditions relevant to plant growth - The United States is broken up into 11 major zones, with subdivisions, based on minimum average annual temperatures. Click [here](#) to find your zone.

Heirloom Seed: Seed from a plant that has passed down for generations through families or communities unaltered; open-pollinated seeds that reproduce true to the parent plant.

Hybrid Seed: Seed that has two different parents of the same species that have been selected for their certain traits in a controlled environment - hybrid does NOT mean genetically modified.

Hydroponics: The process of growing plants in water without the use of soil.

Indeterminate: Plants that will continue to grow and produce fruit throughout the growing season - sprawling, usually requires strong support systems.

Leggy: A term to describe when the plant grows too much greenery before adequate strength in the stem or root - typically a result of low light, over/underwatering and poor temperature conditions.

Long-day Onions: Onion bulbs that will begin growing when the day length reaches 14-16 hours of daylight.

Node: An area of the plant from which leaves, branches and aerial roots grow - when pruning, you usually cut back to the node.

Non-GMO: A non-genetically modified organism; genetic modifications were not a part of the plant breeding process.

N-P-K Fertilizer: A fertilizer composed of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium in various ratios chosen for your particular plant growing needs.

Open-pollinated: Naturally pollinating seeds (no human intervention) that 'breed true' - grow nearly identical to the parent plant.

Scarification: Cutting or nicking the outside of a seed coating to help jumpstart the germination process.

Seed Saving Pledge: "Agriculture and seeds provide the basis upon which our lives depend. We must protect this foundation as a safe and genetically stable source for future generations. For the benefit of all farmers, gardeners and consumers who want an alternative, we pledge that we do not knowingly buy, sell or trade genetically engineered seeds or plants." For more information click here: [Pinetree's stance on Non-GMO seeds](#)

Short-day Onions: Onion plants that will begin growing when daylight length reaches 10-12 hours per day.

Side Dress: A method of applying fertilizer - applying it to the side of the stems of the plant. Best for those that need consistent fertilizing.

Stratification: A process that recreates the temperature conditions if the seed were left outside overwinter; first you chill the seeds for a certain period of time and then gently warm them to prepare for germination.

Xeriscaping: A method of gardening that is designed to reduce water use; typically involves using more native plants.



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