

Know Where the Activities Will Be?  
Read the Farm Women Calendar.



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**Plant lovers' corner**  
**Some types of last year's seed can still be used this Spring**

Most gardeners have some seeds left over from last year and are faced with the question, should I use this seed or buy new?

The cost of seed is usually a small item compared to the loss or delay in starting vegetables or flowers in a garden. Yet most people are reluctant to throw away good seed. University of Delaware extension horticulturist Dr. Charles Dunham says two things influence the ability of old seeds to germinate - the kind of plant they're from and the way in which the seed has been stored.

The life of most common flower and vegetable seeds can be greatly prolonged by storage in a dry, cold atmosphere. But for most home gardeners, last year's seeds are still sitting in a box in the garage or basement where storage conditions are anything but ideal.

Some kinds of seeds will tolerate this type of storage much better than others, explains Dunham. Among vegetable seeds, those of cucumber, endive, melons (both cantaloupe and watermelons), squash, pumpkin, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant and radish are usually perfectly good. Bean, tomato, beet, pepper, celery, carrot, lettuce and pea seeds are usually safe to use if they are planted a little thicker than normal. But corn, onion, parsley, and parsnip seeds should be thrown out and new ones purchased.

Among flowers, most of the common varieties keep very well - those like alyssum, calendula, cosmos, petunia, marigolds, zinnia, pansy and nasturtium.

China aster, strawflower, and dusty miller seeds will probably be safe to plant if sown heavier than normal. Seeds of delphinium, candytuft, and burning bush (Kochia) should be thrown away.

The surest way to know the viability of seed is to run a germination test. Take an 11" x 14" section of paper towel. Moisten it and space the seeds along one side so that they will be covered as the towel is rolled up. Space more rows of seeds along the towel as it is rolled.

Roll the towel loosely to make about five layers. Fold it in half and place it in a quart jar. A little bit of water (perhaps an eighth of an inch) in the bottom of the jar will keep the towel moist. Cover the jar and place it in a warm place (70-80 degrees). When the seeds germinate, count them to determine the per cent of germination.

For the thrifty - minded gardener, the National Garden Bureau has come up with a new idea for storing leftover garden seed. It's a simple approach that keeps seeds dry while keeping them cool. Simply take a paper towel and roll up a few tablespoons full of powdered dried milk from a freshly - opened package. Secure this with a rubber band. Place the roll of dried milk in the bottom of a wide mouth jar and immediately drop in packets of leftover seeds. Seal the jar tightly using a rubber ring to exclude moist air. Store the jar in the refrigerator, not the freezer.

Use seeds as soon as possible. Discard and replace the dessicant once or twice a year. Dried milk is "hygroscopic" and will soon soak up moisture from the air when the bottle is opened. So be quick when removing seed packets: get the lid back on the jar without delay.

Gardeners who try this approach with this year's leftovers may find seed viability improved the second time round, notes the horticulturist.

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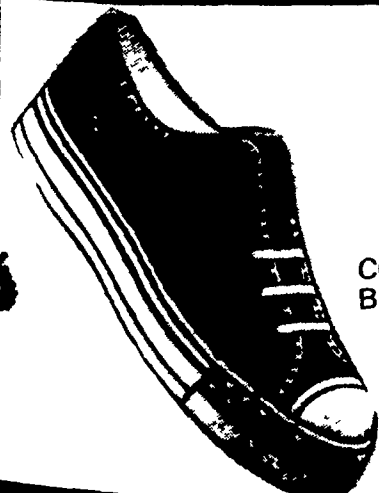
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