

## SEED CLEANING NOTES

### WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO CLEAN SEED BEFORE STORING

- Removes unviable seed
- Removes insect harbour
- Removes unwanted seed
- Reduces risk of carrying soil borne disease and pests with seed

### METHODS OF DRYING SEED

Depending on how the seed is enclosed by the fruit determines how the seed can be extracted, collected and dried.

### **WET SEED**

- This includes tomatoes, cucumbers and other large soft fruits (pumpkins etc)
- Seed is scooped out, rubbed vigorously and placed in a sieve then washed to remove pulp
- Seed dried for approx 10 days

To reduce disease and pest problems fermentation is required

- Scoop out seeds as above then place in a jar with a little water
- Leave to sit at room temp for a few days – lid loosely on
- When a crust forms it indicates that fermentation has occurred and surrounding gelatinous pulp has dissolved
- Clean as above

### **DRY SEED**

- Includes plants such as peas, beans, lettuce, sweet corn, popcorn, maize, radish, lettuce, carrot, beet family (silver beet, beetroot), okra and most garden flowers
- Seeds are housed in a dry receptacle such as a capsule, pod, husk or case
- Lets seeds mature and dry on the plant as much as possible until brown – additional drying can be done under cover to complete the process
- Cleaning is then more about removing dried capsules etc and unviable seed from the desired seed
- Cleaning can be done by
  - Winnowing (after crushing pods or shells first)
  - Using seed cleaning sieves
  - Using machinery where large volumes are processed.

### MANAGING DISEASE

It is wise to put into practice disease control. According to the Seed Saver' handbook this can be done without chemicals by 2 methods. One was mentioned above for wet seed. For dry seed a HOT

WATER TREATMENT can be used. This method is also recommended for tomatoes to reduce bacterial canker and for spinach to reduce downy mildew.

- Heat water to 50C then soak seed for about 25mins held at this temperature. This can be done in an electric fry pan or a saucepan within a saucepan.
- Ensure seeds are well dried after this treatment before storage.

#### STORAGE TIPS

- Seed has a life of approx 3-5 years – some has less than a season (carrots and parsnip)
- Most seed stores well in basic conditions – some needs special attention (carrot seed best stored in the fridge)
- Generally the thinner the seed coat the shorter storage life

So store seed in as best possible conditions as provided below:

- Cool, dark cupboard in southern room of house OR a fridge
- Stored with less than 10% humidity OR dry seed very well, store in a breathable paper bag in cupboard as above OR use silica gel bags to dry air in a sealed containers
- Insect proof conditions OR clean seed well, freeze for 2 days inside a sealed container – remove container and allow to come back to room temp before opening OR seal seed in vacuum packed packets
- Avoid using plastic bags stored outside sealed jars/containers as they are not moisture proof.
- Use seed regularly and as quickly as possible