

OREGON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Seed Library

Why a seed library?

People have been farming for thousands of years. One easy and sustainable way to keep your garden, is to save seeds for next year. Seed saving is a great way to save money, but there are a lot of other reasons to save your seeds.



When you save and share seeds you:

- Develop seeds that become acclimated to our local climate
- Grow plants that are more pest resistant
- Know where your food is coming from
- Create a culture of sharing and community
- Support a sustainable future for your community and your garden!

If you already save seeds, consider contributing to our seed library!

How to get started

Borrowing seeds from Oregon Public Library is free and easy!

1. Select packets of seeds and check them out from the library.
2. Grow your plants and enjoy the harvest.
3. Collect and return some seeds if you are able. There is no penalty for not returning seeds.



What is Fall & Winter Sowing??

Some seeds benefit from cold stratification which helps to increase germination. The easiest way to do this is to plant the seeds in the fall and let the process happen naturally. You can plant the seeds in the ground until it is frozen solid.

Another option for starting seeds that need cold stratification is to use the winter sowing method. For instructions scan QR code or go to <https://www.ripple-effects.com/grow>.

To plant in spring, place the seeds in a wet paper towel then in plastic bag and put in the refrigerator. After about a month, you can start the seeds indoors. Use a pot that is at least 3 inches deep to prevent damaging the precious roots when you transplant the seedling outdoors.



Available Seeds for Fall Sowing 2022

- Hollyhock
- Common Milkweed
- Cinderella Swamp Milkweed
- Red Poppy
- Butterfly Weed*
- Pale Purple Coneflower*
- Hoary Vervain*
- Nodding Onion*
- Prairie Dropseed*
- Rattlesnake Master*

*A Wisconsin native plant. Seeds were collected locally with permission by the Oregon Nature Alliance.

Hollyhock

Alcea rosea

About:

Hollyhock is a classic cottage garden staple that bloom mid-summer with numerous flowers on tall spikes. This variety is a biennial, meaning the plant completes its lifecycle over 2 years. Seeds are a variety of dark pink, light pink, and white.



Images from seed donator's garden



Planting:

Seeds can be sown in fall or in spring. If sown in spring, soak seeds in hot water (110 °F) for 12 hours. Hollyhock have hard shells and soaking them softens the shell making germination easier. Then, seeds can be sown directly outdoors about a week before last frost (early May).

Seeds sown in fall do not need to be soaked and can be down directly in the soil in fall (September-October).

Sow at just ¼ inch deep and about 2 feet apart. Plant in full sun to partial shade. Due to their height, protect from winds and provide support such as a fence, wall, trellis, or stake.

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Seed Collection:

Allow some of the flowers to go to seed. When the flowers have changed into large, brown pods, snap them off and drop them into a paper bag to dry out further. After a few days, remove the seeds from the seed pods being careful to remove any chaff, the pods that hold the seeds.

Seeds donated at the end of the 2019 growing season

Common Milkweed

Alcea rosea

About:

Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) produces purple/pink flower clusters that wildflower gardeners love. Milkweed is one of the Monarch Butterflies' favorite plants and will bring many winged friends to your garden or meadow. It can be a challenge to grow but once established it will thrive for years to come and spread quickly.

Planting:

Plant seeds in late fall (you can plant up until the ground is frozen. Plant seeds 1.5 inch deep and 4-6 inches apart.



Image from fs.fed.us

Seed Collection:

The flower head will develop into a seed pod. Wait until the pod has turned brown to harvest seeds, even better if it has already split open. Store in paper bags in a cool dry place until ready to plant. Leave 25% of the pods on the plants to allow for natural dispersal in the area the seeds were collected from.



Image from extension.unh.edu/milkweed

Seeds donated at the end of the 2022 growing season

Cinderella Swamp Milkweed

Asclepias incarnate

About:

'Cinderella' Swamp Milkweed's vanilla-scented flowers are a treat for the senses. Deep pink petals with white centers bloom in 2" wide clusters. Compact in form, 'Cinderella' makes an excellent choice for small, sunny gardens and performs well in low spots and moist areas. Like all swamp milkweeds, 'Cinderella' is a vital host plant for Monarchs, providing essential food and habitat for both the growing caterpillars and adult butterflies.



Image from American Meadows website

Planting:

Plant seeds in late fall up until the ground is frozen (October-November). Plant seeds 1.5 inch deep and 4-6 inches apart.

Seed Collection:

The flower head will develop into a seed pod. Wait until the pod has turned brown to harvest seeds, even better if it has already split open. Store in paper bags in a cool dry place until ready to plant. Leave 25% of the pods on the plants to allow for natural dispersal in the area the seeds were collected from.



Image from extension.unh.edu/milkweed

Seeds donated at the end of the 2022 growing season

Red Poppy

Papaver rhoeas

About:

Red Poppy, also known as Flanders Poppy, is famed around the world for the carpet of red beauty it creates when in full bloom. A must-have for any wildflower meadow or garden, this easy-to-grow annual delights with bright blooms throughout the summer season. Deer resistant and attractive to pollinators, Red Poppies can be planted in any region of the US



Image from seed donator's garden



Image from American Meadows website

Planting:

Seeds can be direct sown in very early spring before the last frost (March-April) or in fall (September-October).

Seeds are very small. For more even dispersal, the seeds can be mixed with 9 parts sand. Prepare a small area of soil by tilling and smoothing until level. Direct sow seeds in fall by sprinkling on top of prepared soil. Plant in full sun to partial shade.

Watch for small furry seedlings to appear in spring.

Seed Collection:

Allow some of the flowers to go to seed. When the flowers have changed into brown circular pods, remove the pod from the plant and shake seeds out of the top of the pod. Small black seeds will come out of the holes on the top of the pod.



Seeds donated at the end of the 2022 growing season

Butterfly Weed—*Wisconsin Native*

Asclepias tuberosa



About:

Butterfly weed is a milkweed variety that is native from Florida to Canada. Milkweed plants are the sole host plants for monarch butterflies and their nectar-rich blooms also provide essential food to native bees and many other pollinators. This plant produces lovely, bright orange flowers that once established will bloom from summer to fall and as a perennial will come back year after year.

Planting:

Butterfly weed seeds benefit from cold stratification which helps to increase germination. The easiest way to do this is to plant the seeds in the fall and let the process happen naturally. In addition, the winter sowing method can be used (scan QR code for instructions). To plant in spring, place the seeds in a wet paper towel then in plastic bag and put in the refrigerator. After about a month, you can start the seeds indoors. Use a pot that is at least 3 inches deep to prevent damaging the precious roots when you transplant the seedling outdoors. Plant about 1/4 inch deep in a potting soil or seed starting mix and keep moist. It may take a year or two before your plant blooms.



Seed Collection:

After the flower has bloomed, allow the seed pod to develop. Once the pod has turned brown, it will naturally open and release seeds. Once the seed pod has opened, collect the pods and store in a paper bag to dry for a couple weeks. If the pods are harvested too early, the seeds will not be mature and will not grow. Separate seeds from fluff and return in the provided envelope.



Seeds collected with permission locally by the Oregon Nature Alliance 2022



Hoary Vervain—*Wisconsin Native*

Verbena stricta



About:

Hoary vervain is native to the upper mid-west and blooms from early summer to fall. It grows to about 2 feet tall and prefers dry, well-draining soil and full sun. Its seeds are eaten by small mammals and birds, and it is a larval host for the Common Buckeye Butterfly.

Planting:

Hoary vervain seeds benefit from cold stratification which helps break down the hard protective shell on the seeds to increase germination. The easiest way to do this is to plant the seeds in the fall and let the process happen naturally. In addition, the winter sowing method can be used (scan QR code for instructions). To plant in spring, you can place the seeds in a wet paper towel then in a plastic bag and put in the refrigerator for about two months. After that, you can start the seeds indoors. Use a pot that is at least 3 inches deep to prevent damaging the precious roots when you transplant the seedling outdoors. Plant on the surface (do not cover with soil, as these seeds need light to germinate) of potting soil or seed starting mix and keep moist. It may take a year or two before your plant blooms.



Seed Collection:

After the flower has bloomed, allow the seedhead to develop. Once the seedhead has turned brown, it can be clipped off. Shake the seeds out of the seedhead and store in a paper bag to dry for a couple weeks. Return the seeds in the provided envelope.



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Nodding Onion—*Wisconsin Native*

Allium cernuum



About:

Nodding onion is an easy-to-grow native plant that is well-known for its downward facing blooms in shades of white to light lavender. It grows just over a foot tall and can grow in sun or part shade in a variety of soil conditions, including damp clay. Its flowers attract a variety of pollinators, and since it's part of the onion family, rabbits and deer tend to avoid it.

Planting:

Nodding onion seeds benefit from cold stratification which helps break down the hard protective shell on the seeds to increase germination. The easiest way to do this is to plant the seeds in the fall and let the process happen naturally. In addition, the winter sowing method can be used (scan QR code for instructions). To plant in spring, you can place the seeds in a wet paper towel then in a plastic bag and put in the refrigerator for about two months. After that, you can start the seeds indoors. Use a pot that is at least 3 inches deep to prevent damaging the precious roots when you transplant the seedling outdoors. Plant just under the surface in potting soil or seed starting mix and keep moist. It may take a year or two before your plant blooms.



Seed Collection:

After the flower has bloomed, allow the seeds to develop. Once the seedhead has turned brown, the black seeds will be visible. Clip the seedhead and store in a paper bag to dry for a couple weeks. Separate the black seeds from the other dried plant material and return in the provided envelope.



Seeds collected with permission locally by the Oregon Nature Alliance 2022



Pale Purple Coneflower—*Wisconsin Native*

Echinacea pallida



About:

Wisconsin is the upper range of this mid-west native plant. Pale purple coneflower does best in well-draining soil that is not too wet. It has a long taproot that, once established, makes it extremely drought-tolerant. It blooms with lavender to pink petals in early summer and provides nectar to many pollinators, including hummingbirds and butterflies.

Planting:

Pale purple coneflower seeds benefit from cold stratification which helps to increase germination. The easiest way to do this is to plant the seeds in the fall and let the process happen naturally. In addition, the winter sowing method can be used (scan QR code for instructions). To plant in spring, you can place the seeds in a wet paper towel then in a plastic bag and put in the refrigerator for about three months. After that, you can start the seeds indoors. Use a pot that is at least 3 inches deep to prevent damaging the precious roots when you transplant the seedling outdoors. Plant just under the surface in potting soil or seed starting mix and keep moist. It may take a year or two before your plant blooms.



Seed Collection:

After the flower has bloomed, allow the seeds to develop. Once the seedhead has turned brown, clip the seedhead and store in a paper bag to dry a couple weeks. Shake the seeds free of the seedhead and return in the provided envelope.



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Prairie Dropseed—*Wisconsin Native*

Sporobolus heterolepis



About:

Prairie dropseed is an attractive native grass that forms clumps of cascading foliage. It thrives in hot, dry conditions and is best planted in full sun - though it can tolerate some shade. Its seeds are a great source of food for birds in the fall. At around 2 feet tall, prairie dropseed can make a great border for a native garden.

Planting:

Prairie dropseed seeds do not require cold stratification in order to germinate. Seeds can be planted directly outside in the fall, or started indoors at any time. If planting indoors, use a pot that is at least 3 inches deep to prevent damaging the precious roots when you transplant the seedling outdoors. Plant just under the surface in potting soil or seed starting mix and keep moist. In addition, the winter sowing method can be used (scan QR code for instructions). This plant starts small, but quickly turns into a beautiful clump of long slender grasses.



Seed Collection:

Seeds will develop in fall. Strip seeds from grass and store in a paper bag to dry a couple weeks. Return seeds in the provided envelope.



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Rattlesnake Master—*Wisconsin Native*

Eryngium yuccifolium



About:

Rattlesnake master is a distinctive native plant that grows to a height of around 4 feet and has leaves that are very similar to a Yucca plant. It has many white ball-shaped flowers and is a host plant of the black swallowtail butterfly. This plant prefers medium soils, blooms through most of the summer, and brings a unique form to any native garden.

Planting:

Rattlesnake master seeds benefit from cold stratification which helps to increase germination. The easiest way to do this is to plant the seeds in the fall and let the process happen naturally. In addition, the winter sowing method can be used (scan QR code for instructions). To plant in spring, you can place the seeds in a wet paper towel then in a plastic bag and put in the refrigerator for about two months. After that, you can start the seeds indoors. Use a pot that is at least 3 inches deep to prevent damaging the precious roots when you transplant the seedling outdoors. Plant just under the surface in potting soil or seed starting mix and keep moist. It may take a year or two before your plant blooms.



Seed Collection:

After the flower has bloomed, allow the seedhead to develop. Once the seedhead has turned brown, clip it off and store in a paper bag to dry a couple weeks. Crush the seedhead to separate the seeds and return in the provided envelope.



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