

Onions, leeks and shallots

Harvest, save and sow their seeds

Seeds for tomorrow's garden

1 Choose the right varieties



- Open-pollinated or reproducible varieties.
- Healthy, vigorous plants.
- Plants true to the variety.
- Well adapted to your climate.
- Several seed plants if possible.

2 Grow the first season



- Grow sound, well-formed onions, leeks and shallots.
- Select the best plants for seed production.

3 Keep through winter



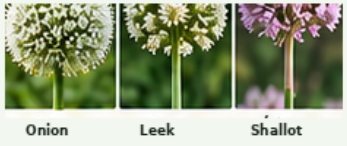
- Onions and shallots: keep bulbs cool, dry, dark and frost-free.
- Leeks: leave in the ground or protect with mulch according to climate.

4 Return to growth



- Replant stored bulbs or leave seed plants in place.
- As days lengthen, plants restart and form flowering stems.

5 Flowering



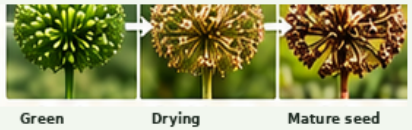
- In spring or early summer, seed plants produce large flower heads.
- One head can contain hundreds of flowers.

6 Pollination



- Bees and other insects carry pollen.
- Avoid flowering compatible varieties too close together.
- Keep several seed plants.
- Record 'open pollination' if pollen origin is not controlled.

7 Seed formation



- After pollination, flowers fade and form capsules.
- Seeds gradually enlarge and mature.
- Mature seeds become characteristically black.

8 Harvest at the right time



- Harvest when most capsules are dry and beginning to open.
- Do not wait until every capsule has opened.
- Cut the heads with a short piece of stem.

9 Dry the flower heads



- Finish drying for several days in a dry, ventilated place.
- Keep away from humidity and strong direct sun.
- The last capsules may open while drying.

10 Extract, sort and clean



- Rub dry flower heads gently.
- Remove capsule and stem debris.
- Sieve or hand-sort carefully.
- Keep well-formed, black, clean seeds.

11 Label the batches



- Record species and variety.
- Add harvest year and origin.
- Record pollination conditions.
- For shallots, note whether they came from seed or bulb propagation.

12 Store



- Store in a dry, cool, dark and stable place.
- Avoid humidity, excessive heat and direct light.
- Renew stocks regularly.

13 Test germination



- As a batch ages, run a small germination test before sowing.
- A full packet is only useful if the seeds are still alive.

14 Reseed



- Use viable seed to grow the next generation.
- Keep several plants to maintain diversity.
- The cycle begins again.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Choose reproducible varieties.
- ✓ Respect the often two-year cycle.
- ✓ Keep bulbs or seed plants through winter.
- ✓ Let several plants flower.
- ✓ Watch for crossing between compatible varieties.
- ✓ Harvest before all capsules open.
- ✓ Dry, clean and label carefully.
- ✓ Store cool, dry and dark.
- ✓ Test germination and renew stocks.

THE FULL CYCLE

Choose → Grow → Winter → Restart

Flower → Pollinate → Harvest → Dry

Extract → Sort → Store → Reseed

Behind every mature flower head lie dozens of new possibilities: saving a few seeds today gives the garden a chance to begin again tomorrow.

Plan. Preserve. Pass it on.