

Dry Seed Processing Quick Guide
Seed Savers Exchange Seed School 2018

Overall Process

1. Harvesting
 - a. Multiple harvests may be necessary
 - b. Harvesting before seeds are fully dry may be necessary
 - c. Try to harvest after morning dew/recent rain has dried off
2. Drying further in protected area
 - a. Protect from
 - i. Pests such as birds and mice
 - ii. Weather
 - b. Focus on air flow- use fans when possible, stir plant material regularly, do not pack tubs too full
 - c. Dark conditions are ideal
 - d. A dehumidifier is helpful
 - e. Dry for ~2+ weeks before threshing
 - i. Dry legumes for~ 1 wk. They can be easily damaged in threshing if over-dry.
3. Threshing to release seeds from plant material
 - a. Threshing Methods
 - i. Hand shelling
 - ii. Field Threshing
 - lii. Massaging/beating
 - iv. Trampling/treading
 - v. Use of Machines
 1. -bean sheller
 2. -corn sheller
 3. -thresher
4. Primary cleaning to separate mature seeds from plant material and immature seeds
 - a. Primary Cleaning Methods
 - i. Screening (sorting by size)
 - ii. Air (sorting by weight)
 - b. It does not have to be perfect, especially if you are planting your seeds next season
5. Pay attention, be innovative with resources, and use your intuition!

Additional harvest notes: It's important to bring seed in when it's actually mature to make seed removal easier, as well as for the quality and viability of the seed being saved. However, some crop types can be harvested before the entire inflorescence has dried down; which can be helpful to avoid shattering (field loss), upcoming inclement weather, and/or loss due to pests. In these cases, we're harvesting seed that is physiologically mature, but has not fully dried. Very few crops mature uniformly, therefore multiple harvests over the course of the season are necessary for most crop types. Sometimes seeds will be threshed in the field (dehiscent crops lend themselves to this, i.e. rutabaga), while other times pods, siliques and other plant material will accompany the seed from the field to a protected location to dry down further before threshing.