Seed Exchanging Guidelines from KidsGardening

If you're planning to exchange seeds that you have saved, review these quick guidelines shared by a horticulturalist at KidsGardening. This is not an exhaustive list, and we encourage you to dive into other available resources to learn more about best practices for saving and sharing seeds.

- If swapping seeds with gardeners at a distance, do some research and take care not to send seeds of any potentially invasive plants. Some plants may be fine (and are common) to grow in cold-winter regions, but can become invasive in regions with mild winters.

- Place seeds in individual, clearly labeled envelopes or containers. Include as much information as possible on the label, such as common name, genus and species, flower color, height, etc. If seeds are for edibles, offer info on flavor, such as if peppers are hot or sweet.

- If seeds are more than a year old, check the germination rate: Place 10 seeds between several layers of moist (but not soggy) paper towels — like a seed sandwich — and slip them into a plastic bag. Loosely close the bag so a bit of air can get in. Keep the “sandwich” flat so the seeds are in contact with the moist paper towels. Check every day or two to be sure paper towels stay slightly moist. After 3-4 days, check seeds for signs of sprouting. If none have sprouted, moisten the paper towels if needed and leave them for another two days and check again. Continue to check them for about 2 weeks; most common seeds will have germinated by then. Calculate the germination rate: If 6 seeds sprouted, the germination rate is 60%. If 30% to 50% of the seeds germinate, let the seed swap recipient know so they’ll be aware to plant extra seeds. Note that some types of seeds naturally have low germination rates. Don't swap seeds with a germination rate lower than 30%.

- Save and share seeds from open-pollinated (aka non-hybrid) varieties. These plants produce seeds that will grow to closely resemble the parent plants. The offspring of hybrid varieties, on the other hand, may produce offspring that look/taste quite different from the parent plants.