

Basic (Flower) Seed Saving

Dee Walsh/Valerie Shepherd

3/13/2023 - BMGC

1) Why Save Seeds?

- Save Money (Ex: 1200 Blanket Flower/Gaillardia seeds sell for \$7.95 on Amazon)
- Fun (Can do it with friends, and in a closed/comfortable space)
- Interesting to Learn About New Types of Flowers (Such as seeds from a bouquet!)
- Volume (Can get *lots* of seeds, more over time – enough to share)
- Sentimental Reasons (I think of my Dad when I see Marigolds, and of my friend Carl when I see Zinnias or Hollyhocks, and of Valerie when I see Well, so *many* things in my garden!)

Note: Seeds can be shared, but probably not sold as a product, because when saving seeds at home, it's impossible to guarantee that they will grow true to size/color, and that the seeds are not (inadvertently) mixed with other types of seeds, and/or that they are not otherwise contaminated (such as with fungus, mold, etc.)

1)

Why Save Seeds?


-Save Money (Ex: 1200 Blanket Flower/Gaillardia seeds sell for \$7.95 on Amazon)

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Purchased another variation 1 time
Last purchased Dec 29, 2016 | Size: 7,000 Seeds | View item | Set reminder



Click image to open expanded view

Gaillardia Indian Blanket Nice Garden Flower by Seed Kingdom 1,200 Seeds
Brand: Seed Kingdom
★★★★☆ 136 ratings

\$7.95
prime One-Day
FREE Returns

Get 5% back (\$0.39 in rewards) on the amount charged to your Amazon Prime Rewards Visa Signature Card.
May be available at a lower price from other sellers, potentially without free Prime shipping.

Size: **1,200 Seeds**

1 Lb Seeds \$44.95	1 Oz Seeds \$10.95	1/4 Lb Seeds \$19.95	1,200 Seeds \$7.95 prime	7,000 Seeds \$12.95 prime
300 Seeds \$2.79				

Plant or Animal Product: Gaillardia
Type: Seed Kingdom
Brand: Seed Kingdom
Item Weight: 0.1 Ounces
Unit Count: 1.0 Count

\$7.95
prime One-Day
FREE Returns

FREE delivery **Tomorrow, March 13.**
Order within 8 mins

Deliver to Denise - Earlysville 22936

Only 18 left in stock - order soon

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10:36 AM
3/12/2023

1) Why Save Seeds?

-Fun (Can do it with friends, and in a closed/comfortable space)



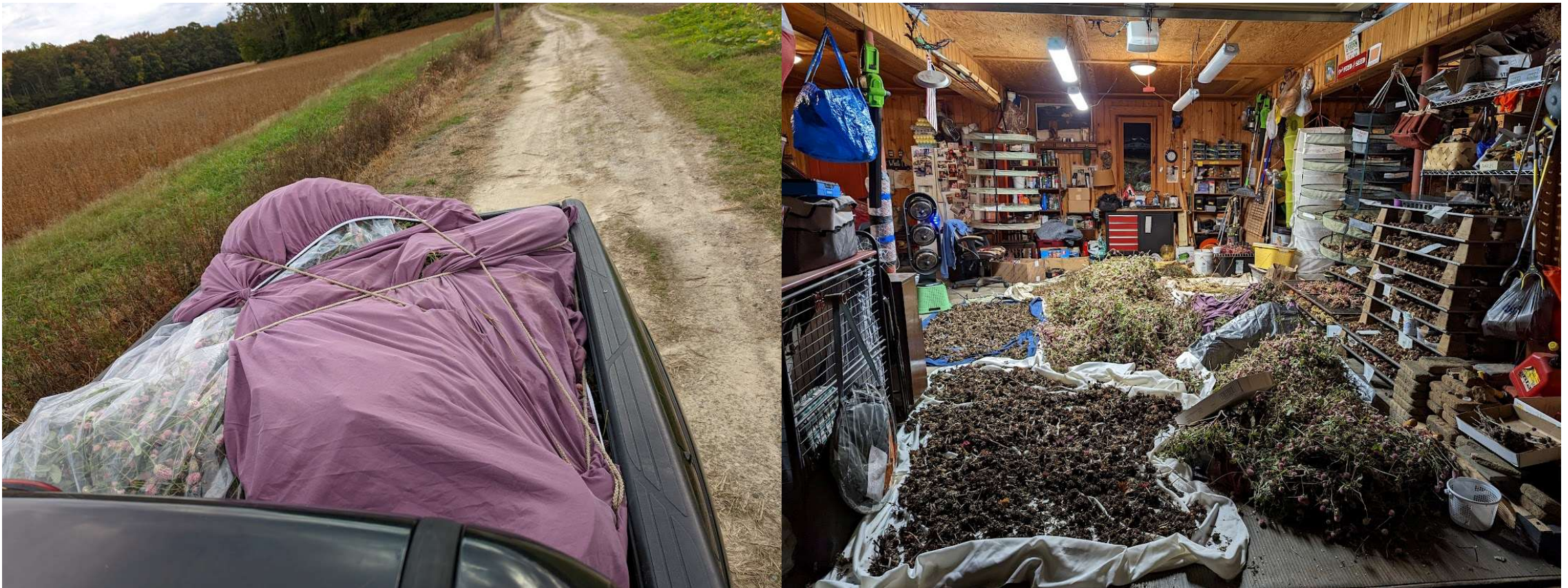
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1) Why Save Seeds?

-Volume (Can get *lots* of seeds, more over time – enough to share)





All those gomphrenas – the ones in the truck – and all over the garage floor..... got smaller!

The ones on the bottom are seedheads; the ones on the top are “processed” – broken apart.



Volume, in terms of seeds, means that you can fill large spaces with relative ease and little expense.



1) Why Save Seeds?

-Sentimental Reasons (I think of my Dad when I see Marigolds, and of my friend Carl when I see Zinnias or Hollyhocks, and of Valerie when I see Well, so *many* things in my garden!)



This is my father, still saving seeds at the tender age of 95.

1) Why Save Seeds?

Note: Seeds can be shared, but probably not sold as a product, because when saving seeds at home, it's impossible to guarantee that they will grow true to size/color, and that the seeds are not (inadvertently) mixed with other types of seeds, and/or that they are not otherwise contaminated (such as with fungus, mold, etc.)



On the left: Can you see how “seed transfer” might possibly happen???

And on the right:
This celosia is naturally mutated.... Variegated, beautiful. But not ‘pure’.



2) What Seeds to Save?

- Almost any flowering plant that has a discernible seed, and some that don't!

- I focus on self-seeding annuals and true perennials, including: Marigold, Zinnia, Gomphrena/Globe Amaranth, Celosia/Cockscomb, Hollyhock, Black-Eyed Susan (Rudbeckia) and Variants, Mexican Hat (aka Upright Prairie Coneflower), Coneflower (Echinacea), Rose Campion, Faux Sunflower, Daisy, Butter Daisy (Melampodium), Queen Anne's Lace, Yarrow, Hibiscus, Rose-of-Sharon, and Blackberry Lily.

- Anything you wish to have more of in your garden in future years.

- Select OUT what you don't want (in my case, it was "Zinderella" zinnias and white/cream marigolds.)



Marigolds, Above – Adding
color well into late November!

Gomphrenas, Far Right

Zinnias, Center



Do you see it? Yes,
Hollyhocks are
Deer Food.

Another reason
for..... “volume”.



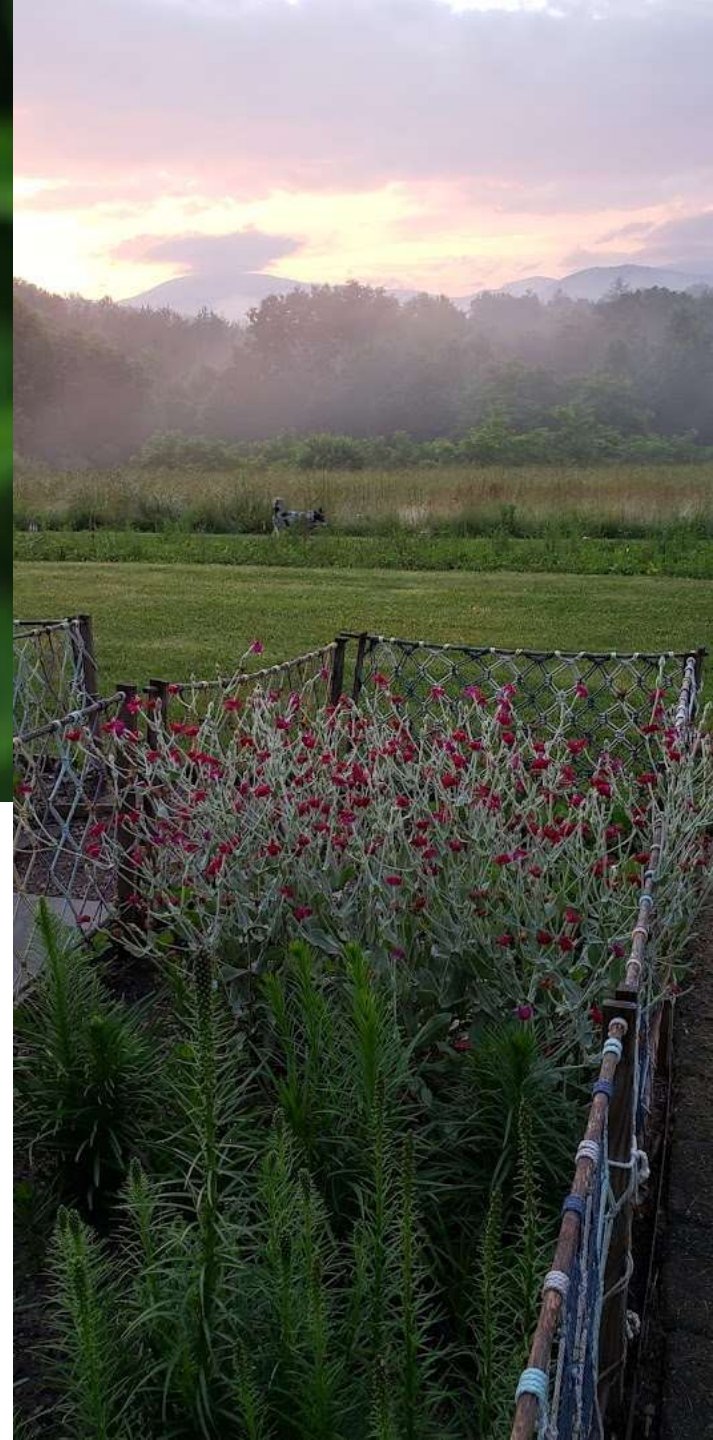
Featuring Plain Old Black-Eyed Susans in the “Experimental Garden”

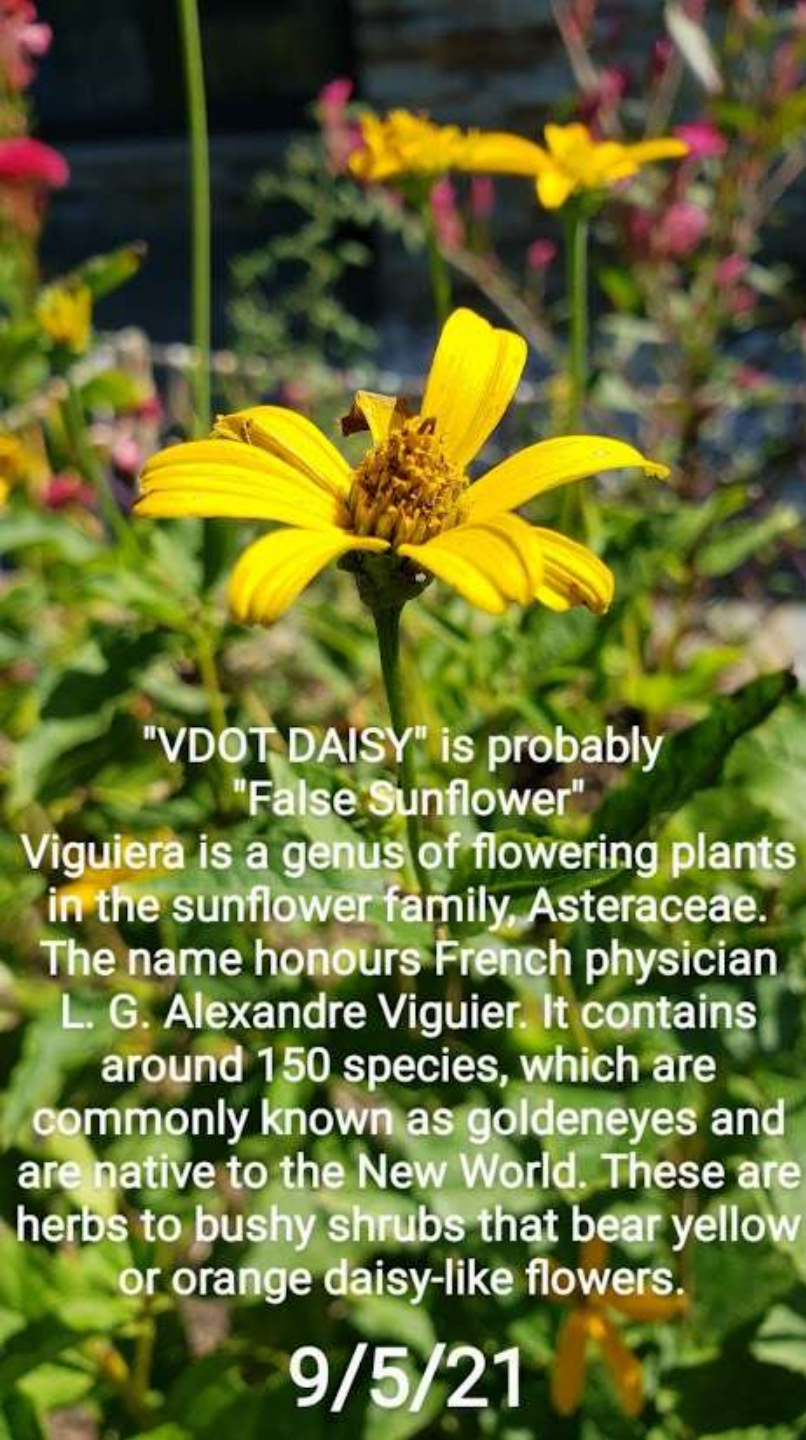


Left:
Mexican Hat with partially mature seedhead.

Center:
A simple coneflower in all her glory.

Right:
Rose Campion in bloom.



A close-up photograph of a single yellow flower with multiple petals and a dark brown center, identified as a 'VDOT Daisy'. The flower is in sharp focus, while the background shows other similar flowers and green foliage, slightly blurred.

I called this “VDOT Daisy” for quite a time before I realized it was a type of Sunflower. It’s bushy, grows vigorously with little care, and is about chest-height..... and I “liberated” a small handful of flowers (aka seed-heads) from the side of the road at the VDOT site on Free Union Road. Felt justified that my tax dollars were coming back to me in the form of flowers. (Ask for forgiveness, not permission, a wise person once told me.)

"VDOT DAISY" is probably
"False Sunflower"

Viguiera is a genus of flowering plants in the sunflower family, Asteraceae. The name honours French physician L. G. Alexandre Viguier. It contains around 150 species, which are commonly known as goldeneyes and are native to the New World. These are herbs to bushy shrubs that bear yellow or orange daisy-like flowers.

9/5/21





These Shasta Daisies were taken via rootstock from my father's garden. He got them to flourish; I can barely make them live each year, and have had very little luck growing them from seed.

Advice welcomed.



Melampodium
AKA “Butter Daisy” grows vigorously from seed each year. Although not a true perennial, it does ‘self-seed’ and will appear to come back, but it should be re-seeded each year for best results.



Melampodium in full glory (with a few verbena and gomphs volunteering in there, too!)



Yup, I stole this image of beautiful, simple Queen Anne's Lace from the internet. Gorgeous, right?!

The Yarrow at right demonstrates how some flowers bloom beautifully and die off..... Not so beautifully.





Blackberry
Lily in all
life cycles

Rose of Sharon; mature upright bushes
of slightly different colors

Hibiscus, grown from a single seed from my father-in-law's potted plant. I was surprised that it grew, and even more surprised that it survived the winter!

Did you forget where we were on the handout? We were here!

2) What Seeds to Save?

- Almost any flowering plant that has a discernible seed, and some that don't!

- I focus on self-seeding annuals and true perennials, including: Marigold, Zinnia, Gomphrena/Globe Amaranth, Celosia/Cockscomb, Hollyhock, Black-Eyed Susan (Rudbeckia) and Variants, Mexican Hat (aka Upright Prairie Coneflower), Coneflower (Echinacea), Rose Campion, Faux Sunflower, Daisy, Butter Daisy (Melampodium), Queen Anne's Lace, Yarrow, Hibiscus, Rose-of-Sharon, and Blackberry Lily.

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2) What Seeds to Save?

-Select OUT what you don't want (in my case, it was "Zinderella" zinnias and white/cream marigolds.)

I didn't like the way the white/cream marigolds died – they were truly ugly, and unless you dead-headed every day, it made the others simply look bad..... And the Zinderellas were too small for my taste. Too much foliage for such a small bloom.

And I have also chosen to remove most of the white yarrow from my cultivated beds – but they're fine in the naturalized areas.

I am trying, with little success to propagate the yellow and red varieties of yarrow.



Lantana planted 6/27/21
(already spent)



Queen Red Lime Zinnias
Green Envy Zinnias from 4/20/21 planted 4/20/21

3) Where *ARE* Those Seeds, Anyway?

- In husks (Marigold, Sweet William)
- In pods (Blackberry Lily, Canna Lily, Nigella, Rose
Campion, Hollyhock, Cleome)
- On stems or stem supporting foliage
(Celosia/Cockscomb)
- In the core of the flowerhead
(Coneflower, Zinnia, Rudbeckia, Melampodium)
- Who *knows*? Some are too tiny to see!

3) Where *ARE* Those Seeds, Anyway?

-In husks (Marigold, Sweet William)



The Marigold pictured here were gifted to me by Bucky's brother's wife's father (you figure that one out!)

They were VERY full, and I felt that the petals needed to be clipped off to prevent molding.

You can see the husks containing the seeds on the right.

Sorry, no photo of dead Sweet William seeds until.....



Now!

Isn't Sweet William pretty
even when it's dead?

And here's what
you might get if you
did collect the seed
of the lovely Sweet
William!



3) Where *ARE* Those Seeds, Anyway?

-In pods (**Blackberry Lily**, **Canna Lily**, **Nigella**, Rose Campion, Hollyhock, Cleome)



3) Where *ARE* Those Seeds, Anyway?

-In pods (Blackberry Lily,
Canna Lily, Nigella, **Rose
Campion**, Hollyhock, Cleome



Rose Champion Bulbs



Rose Champion
Seeds Are Tiny

3) Where *ARE* Those Seeds, Anyway?

-In pods (Blackberry Lily, Canna Lily, Nigella, Rose Campion, **Hollyhock**, Cleome)

On the left, the Hollyhock seeds are immature and probably not viable.

On the right, the seeds are mature and ready to harvest.



3) Where *ARE* Those Seeds, Anyway?

-In pods (Blackberry Lily, Canna Lily,
Nigella, Rose Campion, Hollyhock,
Cleome)

Cleome seed pods (here shown
not yet ripe enough to harvest)
tend to dry out and pop open
quickly, and so you need to
monitor them closely if you
want to gather some seeds
before Mother Nature spreads
them indiscriminately...



3) Where *ARE* Those Seeds, Anyway?

-On stems or stem
supporting foliage
(**Celosia/Cockscomb**)



3) Where *ARE* Those Seeds, Anyway?

-In the core of the flowerhead
(**Coneflower**, Zinnia, Rudbeckia,
Melampodium)



3) Where *ARE* Those Seeds, Anyway?

-In the core of the flowerhead
(Coneflower, **Zinnia**,
Rudbeckia,
Melampodium)

On the left, the Zinnia is still relatively fresh, and the seed is whitish- immature. On the right, the flower is spent, and the seed is dark – mature.



3) Where *ARE* Those
Seeds, Anyway?

-In the core of the
flowerhead
(Coneflower, Zinnia,
Rudbeckia,
Melampodium)



3) Where *ARE* Those Seeds, Anyway?

-In the core of the flowerhead

(Coneflower, Zinnia, Rudbeckia, Melampodium)

$$(x + a)^n = \sum_{k=0}^n \binom{n}{k} x^k a^{n-k}$$

Just waking you up!

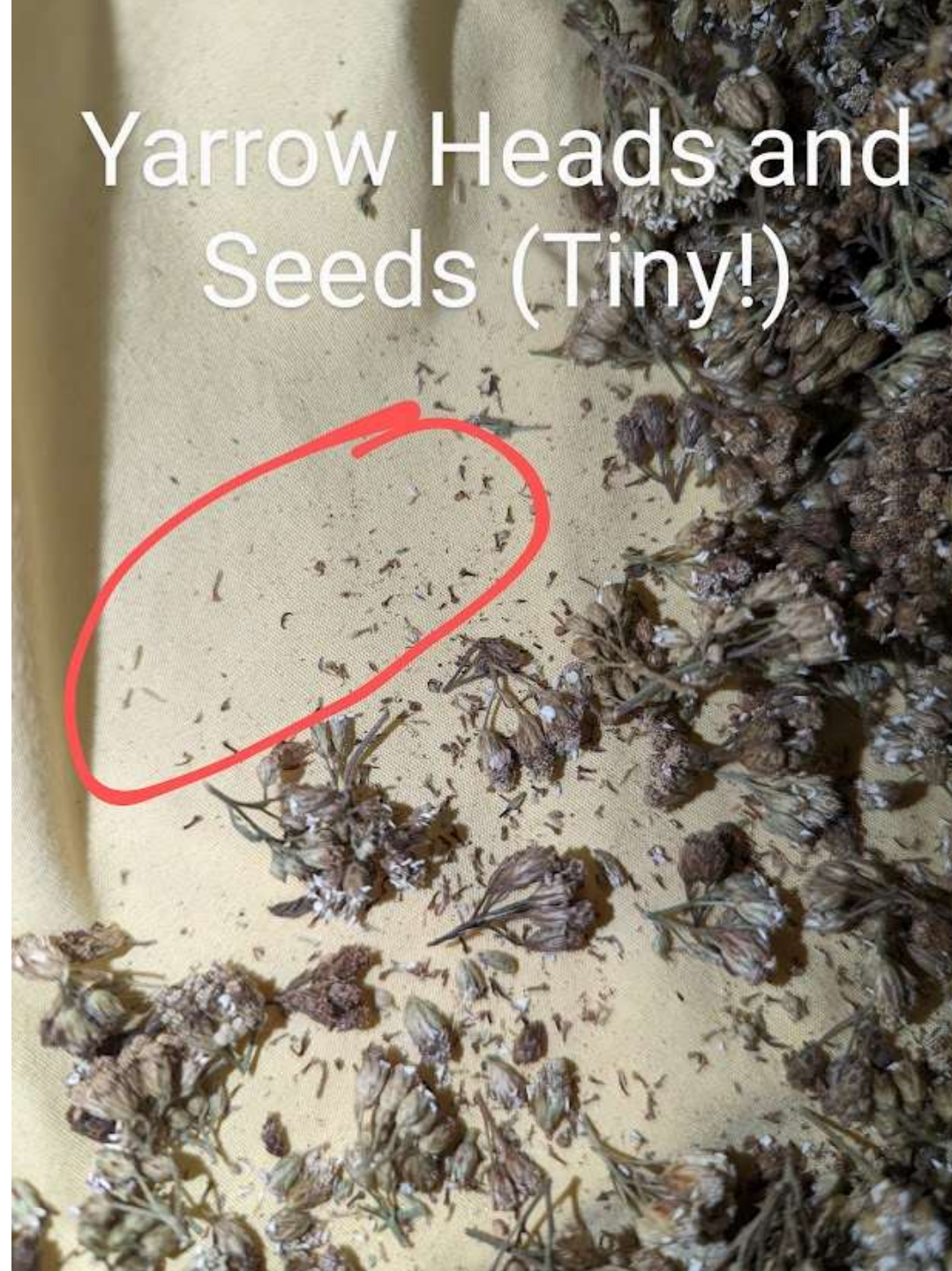
I want to show you a slide you've seen before.....



Melampodium
AKA “Butter Daisy” grows vigorously from seed each year. Although not a true perennial, it does ‘self-seed’ and will appear to come back, but it should be re-seeded each year for best results.

3) Where *ARE* Those
Seeds, Anyway?

-Who knows? Some
are too tiny to see!



(And don't forget
that slide you
saw before, of
the lovely Rose
Campion and her
tiny seeds!)

4) Deciding When to Harvest

- Best to take from flowers that are naturally spent/withered
- Seeds should be mature but not yet released naturally onto the ground/in the air

(It's a tricky balance, trying to let seeds mature naturally vs. having them eaten by animals or strewn by the wind!)

- Avoid harvesting after a rain or heavy dew; the flower heads should be DRY.

- Anytime after a killing frost (even if not yet fully spent)

- Mature seeds are usually dark(er). Examples shown today:

Marigold, zinnia, gomphrena, canna lily, hollyhock, blackberry lily

4) Deciding When to Harvest

-Best to take from flowers that are naturally spent/withered



Gomprhenas pictured here;
you get the idea.....

And if you're still not sure about what's "young" and what's "mature", Mother Nature points it out with these side-by-side Strawflowers.



4) Deciding When to Harvest

-Seeds should be mature but not yet released naturally onto the ground/in the air

(It's a tricky balance, trying to let seeds mature naturally vs. having them eaten by animals or strewn by the wind!)

This, by the way, is the bear looking for seeds that are

“just perfect!” →



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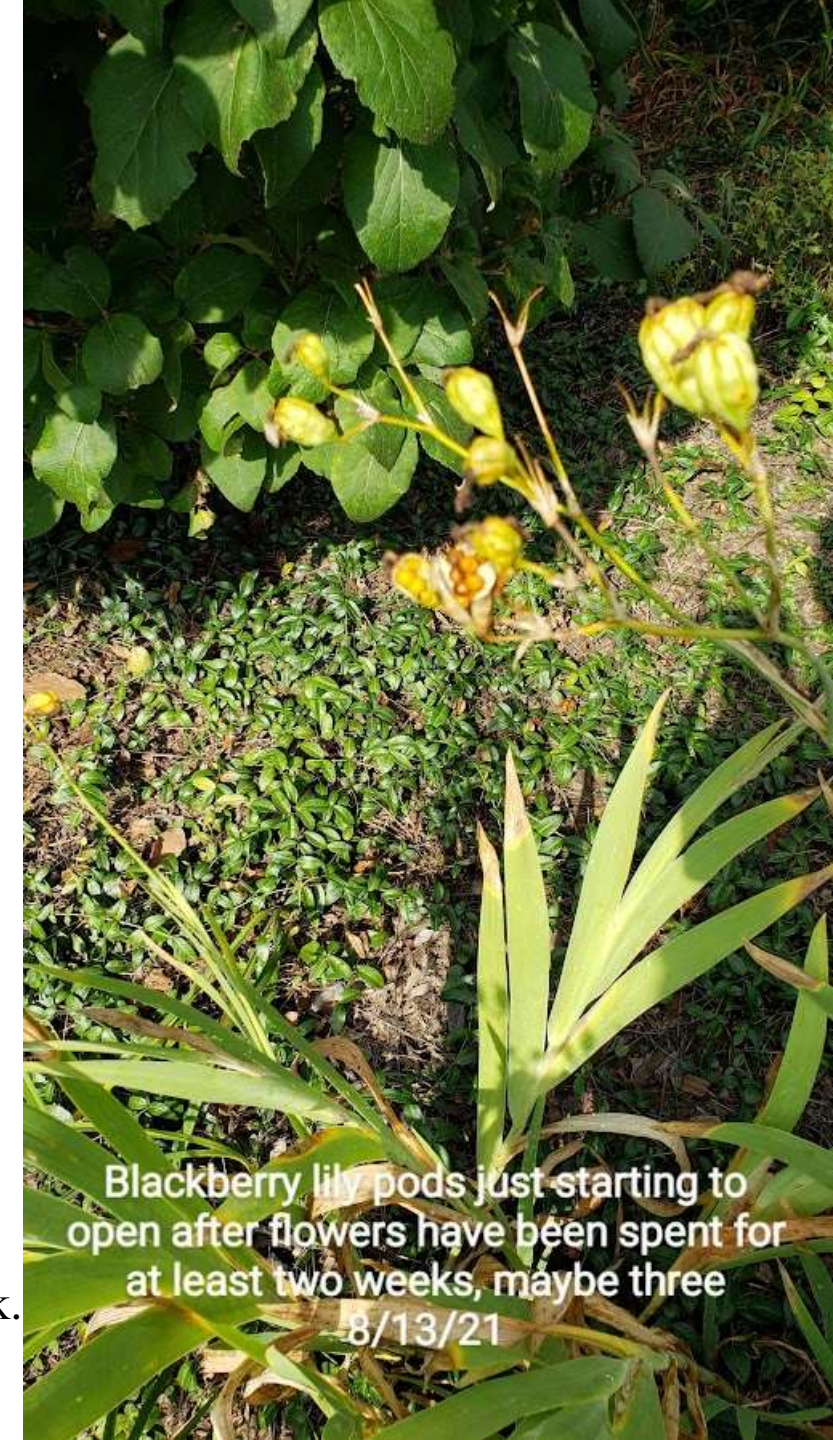
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Marigold seeds on the left are darker (two-toned) and mature; on the right they are not.

Fully mature Blackberry Lily seeds will be dark black.



Blackberry lily pods just starting to open after flowers have been spent for at least two weeks, maybe three

8/13/21

5) Harvesting Methods

- Cut/Pinch off heads
- Pull up whole plant (good for measuring height if you don't have time to measure and sort on the fly)
- Make use of sheets, tarps, buckets – for laying out piles/sorting

5) Harvesting Methods

-Cut/Pinch off heads.....

Yes, self evident, basic, easy-as-pie!

But – I bet you’ve never tried it with *these flowers!!*



Who among you guessed that they were
Wooden??

5) Harvesting Methods

-Pull up whole plant (good for measuring height if you don't have time to measure and sort on the fly)



5) Harvesting Methods

-Make use of sheets, tarps, buckets – for laying out piles/sorting



6) Drying/Storing Your Seeds

-**Ventilation** to prevent molding is your #1 priority!

-If seeds/seedheads are clumped or stored together, separate them as much as possible – for example, stir a large bucket of seeds with a broom handle or your hands on a regular basis.

-Drying racks are readily available. Examples of commercially available racks, circular hangers are attached. I make my own by using almost anything at hand: old window/door screens (Habitat for Humanity is a great source), mesh/sheer fabric, meshed packing materials, stringing sheaves of flowers up-side-down over catch basins – there's no limit to the imagination for ways to dry seeds!

-If there's a great deal of foliage, and you are risking a mold problem, consider trimming the petals off. This is time-consuming (but does have a certain relaxing Zen factor to it.) Another potential disadvantage is losing some seed along the way.

-Seed heads should be fully dried before “processing” them (collecting the seed), and they can stay on the drying racks for months, until it's convenient for you to open them.

-If you're storing seeds in a garage or shed that is sometimes exposed to air (like when the garage doors are open), be aware that wind/drafts can be a problem – you don't want all your hard work to blow away in the breeze!

-Fans are useful in the more humid summer months to keep the humidity down.

-IF you notice any mold in a group of seedheads, remove them and surrounding heads and dispose of them promptly. They pose a threat to all your other seeds, and they're not worth trying to save.

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HORTIPOTS' Herb Drying Rack 8 Layer Drying Net Dryer Stand Square 28 x 28 Inch to Dry Laundry Clothes or Cure Plants Like Herb Fruit Flowers

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- **6-TIER DRYING RACK:** This professional air drying kit from Terradise offers 2, 4, or 6 circular 3-foot wide platforms for up to 42 sq. ft. of space to dry your herbs, nuts, seeds, spices, vegetables,

Ships from: Amazon



MECHEER Herb Drying Rack Hanging Dryer Mesh Drying Rack with Green Zipper, 2ft 8 Layer Plant Drying Rack Dry Net Pruning Shears, Hook, Garden Gloves for Herb, Flowers, Bud, Seeds, Nuts (24"x63")

Visit the MECHEER Store

★★★★☆ 30 ratings

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Only 1 left in stock - order soon

Material	Polyester
Brand	MECHEER
Mounting Type	hanging
Special Feature	Durable,Sturdy

About this item

- **PRODUCT SIZE:** With great size D24xH63 inch, 8 Layer(2ft Wide), the herb rack is very roomy, and get great airflow for drying. You can hang the mesh drying net without taking up too much room, but the multiple layers will give you a lot of drying area. Perfect for 360° air-drying herbs, flowers, fruits, vegetables, fishes, plants, clothes, etc.
- **HIGH QUALITY:** Made of durable polyester mesh and high-density material, the plant drying net is durable and will not break easily under the sun. The built-in strong steel and sturdy mesh offer enough support to load a large number of items.
- **HORIZONTAL ZIPPER DESIGN:** Each layer of the flower drying rack has a smoothy and well-made zipper. The zipper is open in the middle of each layer. With 15 inch length, you can easily put in and take back the plants. You can also close each compartment tightly to prevent birds from

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All ▾seed drying rack



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8 Layer Herb Drying Rack, Collapsible Hanging Herb Buds Dry Net, Detachable Mesh Hydroponics Plant Drying Rack Net with Storage Bag, for Drying Seeds, Herb, Bud, Hydroponic Plants

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- Save Space: Effectively solve the problem of quickly drying a large number of plant materials such in a small space.
- Hanging Drying Net: Folding design allows fast and efficient storage, vertical design, extremely high space utilization.
- Scope of Application: Suitable for drying various plants, such as grass, flowers, vegetables, buds.

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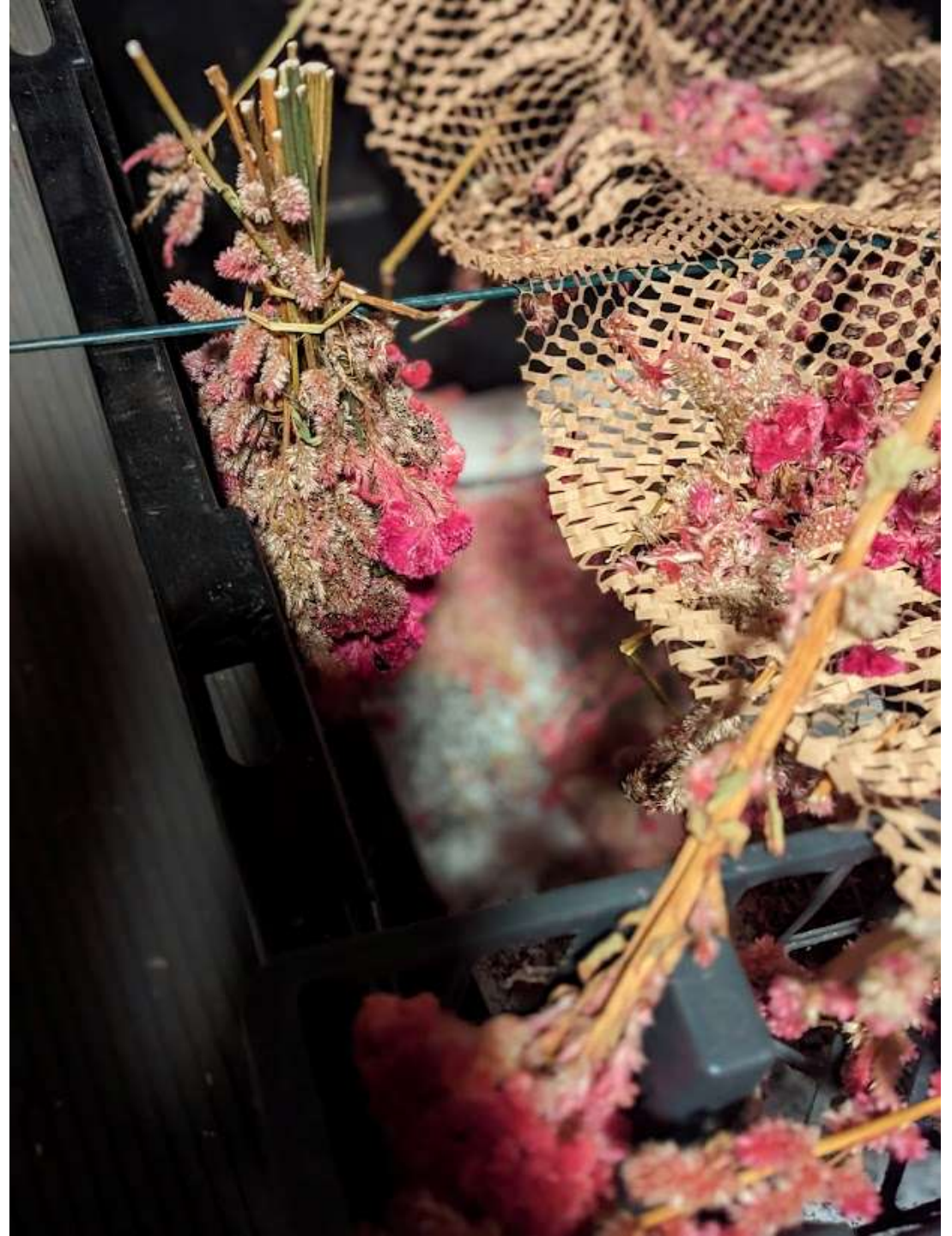
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6) Drying/Storing Your Seeds

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Dee's FEED & SEED



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-If there's a great deal of foliage, and you are risking a mold problem, consider trimming the petals off. This is time-consuming (but does have a certain relaxing Zen factor to it.) Another potential disadvantage is losing some seed along the way.

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6) Drying/Storing Your Seeds

-If you're storing seeds in a garage or shed that is sometimes exposed to air (like when the garage doors are open), be aware that wind/drafts can be a problem – you don't want all your hard work to blow away in the breeze!

and Although it sounds opposite of the warning about drafts.....

-Fans are useful in the more humid summer months to keep the humidity down.

6) Drying/Storing Your Seeds

-IF you notice any mold in a group of seedheads, remove them and surrounding heads and dispose of them promptly. They pose a threat to all your other seeds, and they're not worth trying to save.

7) “Processing” Your Seeds – Getting the Seeds Out of the Flowers and Ready to Sow!

- For seeds in husks, you can break them by hand, or crush them. Stomping them is pretty cathartic.
- For seeds in pods, there’s little else to do than to open them by hand.
- For seeds in a core, you can easily break them by hand, or you can crush them.
- For seeds on stems/in foliage, hanging them upside-down will usually release most of them. You can get the rest by shaking/tapping/beating them.
- For seeds that are nestled in flower-heads, and that are so tiny you can hardly see them, you can just shake the seed-head to release the seeds.
- For stomping: Try using a big box. Tape the voids/corners. If you want, line with an old sheet. Dump seedheads into the box, put on a big pair of boots, and channel Lucille Ball stomping grapes. It works.
- For beating: Get a big, heavy plastic jug, add a few golf balls and seed heads and shake it vigorously. The golf balls (or smooth roundish stones) beat the seeds right out (and occasionally they’ll crack the jug, too – be careful.)
- For hand-opening husks, pods, and very compact flower-heads: Use lightweight rubber (exam) gloves, get a good chair and maybe an audiobook, and go to it. Very compact heads or spiky heads (such as Rudbeckia and Coneflower) might require the assist of a pincer-like hand tool to pull apart the heads.

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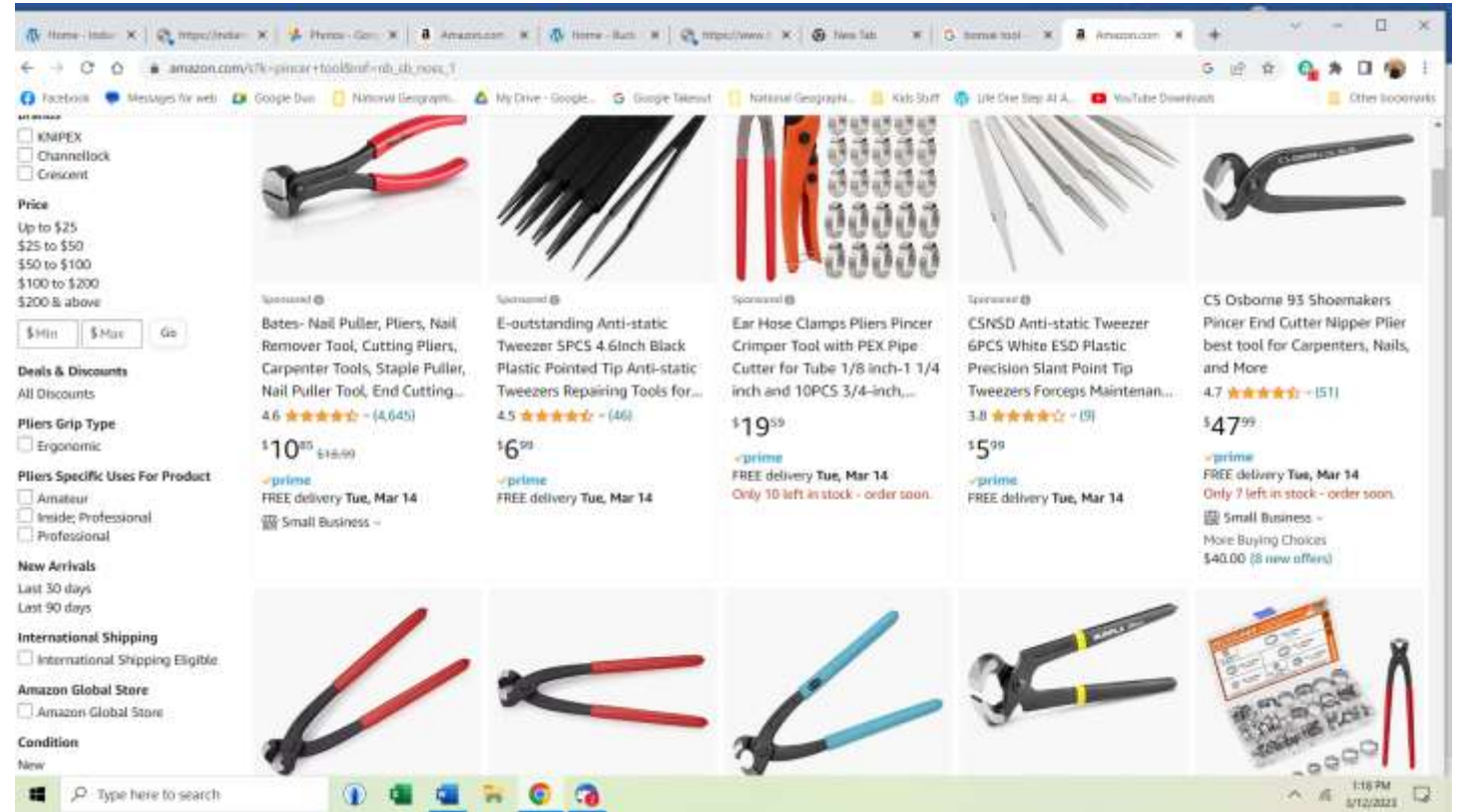
-For beating: Get a big, heavy plastic jug, add a few golf balls and seed heads and shake it vigorously. The golf balls (or smooth roundish stones) beat the seeds right out (and occasionally they’ll crack the jug, too – be careful.)



7) “Processing” Your Seeds – Getting the Seeds Out of the Flowers and Ready to Sow!

-For hand-opening husks, pods, and very compact flower-heads: Use lightweight rubber (exam) gloves, get a good chair and maybe an audiobook, and go to it.

Very compact heads or spiky heads (such as Rudbeckia and Coneflower) might require the assist of a pincer-like hand tool to pull apart the heads.



8) Final Thoughts:

- If you're invested in sowing flowers from seeds, I'd suggest taking a lot of notes, and photos during each step of the process (and *labeling* them). This will help you remember as you go along.
- Gifts of seeds are most often very welcome (and inexpensive to share!)
- Giving a bouquet of flowers back to someone who has given *you* the seeds is especially meaningful.
- Be aware of the “Bear in a China Shop” syndrome. I am, myself, most often that bear – I cannot tell you how many times I've knocked over a tray of seeds I just sorted, or dropped a bucket and mixed seeds here and there..... best just to take it slow and easy, especially if your space is cramped.
- Unused envelopes, such as from organizations requesting donation, make great seed-sharing containers. I also save paper bags from just about everywhere: pharmacy bags, fast-food bags, you name it. All can be re-used. I also save small pill bottles, jugs (like M&M containers) and so on for the larger stuff – but those should be *ventilated*. Paper products are best for long-term storage, as they “breathe” more readily. Never use Ziploc or plastic bags!











Save enough seeds to transform this.....



Into something fun!



Useful References (Only a few of many) — feel free to recommend any others that you like!

The Complete Guide to Seed Saving by Robert Gough and Cheryl Moore-Gough, 2011, Storey Publishing

Annuals, Perennials & Bulbs by Anne Halpin, 2001, Creative Homeowner Press, pp. 39, 117, & multiple others specific to flower types

The Gardener's A-Z Guide to Growing Flowers from Seed to Bloom by Eileen Powell, 2004, Potting-Bench Reference Books

The Flower Garden: How to Grow Flowers from Seed by Clare Foster and Sabina Rüber, 2019, Laurence King Publishing

Garden Flowers From Seed by Christopher Lloyd and Graham Rice, 1991, Penguin Putnam Publishing

From: <https://www.almanac.com/how-save-flower-seeds-next-year>

Or in printable PDF format at:

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The

End

