



Method of cutting open tomatoes (left) and of extracting the pulp (right).

Marrows should be selected for keeping quality if it is desired to store them for winter use. Heaviness in individual fruits should denote a good thick skin and firm flesh.

The flesh of pumpkins, squashes, and marrows can be tested for flavour when it is cooked. The seed from the most desirable types can then be saved. Several washings with water will remove most of the flesh from the seeds, which can then be spread out in the sunshine to dry. The germination of these seeds can be affected if they are subject to frost or even chilly conditions. Seed can be bagged when thoroughly dry.

Parsnips, Carrots, Beetroot, and Turnips

As parsnips, carrots, beetroot, and turnips are biennials, they must be grown for two seasons before seed can be produced. Selection of roots should be made from the main crops when they are full grown. Roots should be lifted carefully, and when selections are made for replanting uniformity in size and shape should be considered. Desirable characteristics of carrots also include a small core, good colour, crispness or tenderness, and good flavour. As it will not be possible to test for the desired internal qualities roots set aside, several very similar roots can be selected and one or two cut for close inspection. This would apply also in some respects to the other types of root crops. Gardeners may also wish to select carrots and parsnips with distinct stump roots instead of tapered roots. Stump roots are more economical from the culinary point of view, but they may be difficult to grow as main crops if soil conditions are dry during summer.

After the roots have been selected their tops should be removed, except for the basal 2 or 3 in. This will prevent injury to the central bud. Roots can then be stored for the winter in a box of dry sand or soil or in a pit lined with straw or sacking in a dry part of the garden.

In spring the roots should be set out about 30 in. apart in exactly the way in which they grew the previous season. As the seed stalks develop staking will be necessary.

Turnip seed should be harvested as soon as the pods turn yellow. If the stalk is cut at this stage and in the early morning, much loss of seed through shattering will be prevented. Parsnip, carrot, and beetroot can be safely left until fully mature, but care should be taken to harvest the seed before it drops. Progressive collection of ripe parts of seed heads may be advisable, as ripening of complete heads is rather patchy.

Threshing is best done by pulling the seed from the stalks, placing it in a strong cloth bag, and beating the bag with a heavy stick. The fine stalks and other rubbish can then be winnowed from the seed, which should be spread out to dry thoroughly before being stored.

Cabbages

Cabbage seed is produced in many ways. Plants or parts of them must be over-wintered for planting out the following spring. Some seed growers save only the stump of the plant and others store the head with part of the stump. These are planted out in spring and proceed to produce seed stalks from the cabbage head. A third method is to plant out crops so late that they do not mature before winter. The plants over-winter in the garden and in spring mature and throw out seed heads. This last method and the stump method are the most satisfactory for home gardeners.

Cabbages should be selected for desirable characteristics as they mature, after which the stumps can be saved or the plants left to over-winter in the garden. Desirable points include uniformity of type, weight of head, and length of time to mature.

The seed stalks of brassicas are best staked as they develop to prevent damage by wind. As brassica seed pods shatter very easily, harvesting should begin when the pods turn yellow. The seed heads can then be spread on paper in a dry, airy place to ripen. A light beating, if necessary, will cause the pods to shatter. The seed should be allowed to become entirely ripe and hard before being stored.

Onions

Onion bulbs should be selected from the main crop of plants grown for

domestic purposes. As normally a large number of plants is grown, a good selection can be made. Bulbs should be selected for shape, appearance, and storage quality. Flavour is also important, but is difficult to assess when the bulb itself must be saved for seed production. A narrow neck usually denotes the presence of one seed stalk. This type is the most desirable for seed production and also for storage, as the narrow neck closes well and tends to exclude storage-rot organisms.

Onions should be well matured before storage for winter. In early spring they should be set out with about a third to one quarter of their depth in the soil. The seed stalk must be staked as it grows, otherwise the whole plant may topple over. As onion seed turns black before it is ripe, care must be taken to allow it to ripen properly, but it should be harvested progressively before it starts to fall. Seed stalks should be cut about 1 ft. below the seed head and placed in shallow, paper-lined trays. Trays should be placed in sunshine until the seed is properly ripe. Seed should then be rubbed out, winnowed, and bagged.

Lettuce

Lettuce seed can be produced in 1 year if plants are set out as early as possible. Tenderness, flavour, uniformity, speed of growth, tightness of head, and ability to stand dry, hot conditions are characteristics which should be sought.

When plants have been selected it is advisable to cut surrounding plants as quickly as possible to give selected ones room to develop. If the heads are very tight, it may be necessary to cut the tops carefully to allow the seed stalks to push through. Lettuce seed matures slowly and somewhat unevenly; therefore a close watch should be kept on the first seed heads to open. Then the whole plant should be pulled up, the seed head inserted in a paper bag, and the whole plant hung up in a dry, airy place until the seed is fully ripe. Threshing, sifting, and winnowing will give a good, clean product.