

Seed Space Vocab List



Annual – A plant that will only last through one season

Aspirator – A type of machine used for cleaning seeds that utilizes airflow to help separate seed and chaff

Barrier Method – An isolation method that uses a physical barrier around the plants (Lettuce bags and blossom bags are an example of this)

Chaff – The outer parts of the plant that contain the seed but are not the seed

Compost – A type of organic matter that can be added to soil to help increase nutrients and moisture retention

Cross-pollination – When a plant is pollinated by pollen from another plant. The type we want to prevent with barrier methods is the type between two different types of plants, which would result in a hybrid rather than another generation of the same variety of plant

Crop Timing for Isolation – An isolation method that works with the flowering time of different crops, planting them so they don't overlap, and so that there is only one variety blooming at a time

Cultivar – A type of plant that has been selectively bred by humans for desired traits

Day Length – The number of hours of daylight in a day

Deawning/Debearding – Another way to clean seeds, usually done first after collecting them, involves removing larger plant parts like "beards" (hair-like strands) and "parachutes" that help the seeds spread. This makes it easier to clean the remaining seeds. Examples of plants with these kinds of seeds include Joe-Pye Weed, Goldenrod, grasses, and grains.

Germination – When a seed starts to sprout a young plant

GMO seed – GMO (genetically modified organism) seed that has been genetically modified to display certain traits such as the fruit size as well as pesticide and disease resistance

Grex – A plant that has genetics from a large pool of different varieties of plants that have been allowed to cross-pollinate

Harden off – A process that allows plants to acclimate to the outdoor climate before planting

Harvest – To gather the fruit or seeds of the plant

High tunnel – A season extension technique that uses a pipe framing and a layer or two of greenhouse-grade plastic to form a structure that acts as a greenhouse without all of the extra systems, instead using passive ventilation

Hybrid – A cross between two or more species to create a new variety

Isolation – Keeping plants of the same species separate to prevent cross-pollination

Landrace – A localized population of plants that have diverse genetics with similar characteristics that don't always breed true to type

Lettuce Bags/Blossom Bags – A method of isolation that involves a mesh bag that is placed over the flower/plant to prevent cross-pollination

Low tunnel – A season extension technique that works similarly to the high tunnel strategies that work the same way as row covering, but with framing structures as well

Maturity – How old a plant needs to be before it starts producing

Mulch – A material (can be wood, grass, sheep's wool, etc.) that is put around the base of a plant or in other areas where you want to retain moisture and keeps weeds from growing

Native plant species – Plants that have evolved in a certain area and are specifically adapted to that area

Open Pollinated – When pollination occurs by insect, wind, animals, humans, or other natural mechanisms which allow for a free flow of pollen resulting in more genetic diversity

Outcross(ing) – The mating of unrelated individuals

Patented Seed – Seed, often GMO seed, that is protected by patent law. As there are many different restrictions and conditions for what happens with these seeds, be sure to look up what the terms are for your seed use if it is protected.

Perennial – A plant that keeps coming back season after season

Plant – To place seeds, seedlings, or full plants in the ground to grow

Plant Hardiness Zone – A chart that helps determine which climate areas a plant will grow best in

Pollinator plants – Plants that attract and are good for all different types of creatures that assist in the pollination of plants (i.e. bees, butterflies, birds, bats, etc.)

Rogue (for plants) – A plant that is different from the standard variety. Also to pull plants, seedlings, etc. displaying undesirable characteristics. Size, disease resistance, size, color, taste, date to maturity.

Self Crossing – plants that are self-compatible.

Self-Pollinating – Plants that have perfect flowers that can self-pollinate such as peas, some beans, some tomatoes, etc.

Shelling stage (for beans) – When the beans are dry and can then be removed from the pod

Sieve – A tool used for seed saving to help isolate the seed from the rest of the chaff and other parts of the plant

Sow – To place seeds in the ground so they have a chance to germinate (grow)

Winnow – A method of separating seed and grain from chaff using the wind

Winter Sowing – A method of starting seeds that would otherwise need an artificial cold period in order to trigger their sprouting and growth cycle, that uses a plastic container with soil in it to create a mini greenhouse effect to assist the plants' growth and increase their survival rate

All definitions pulled from Seed Savers Exchange, Experimental Farm Network, University of Minnesota Extension, Iowa State University Extension, the Tallgrass Prairie Center, and NCR-SARE