

Seed Saving and Cleaning

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UNIVERSITY OF
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EXTENSION



NATIVE PLANTS

A MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM



United States Department of Agriculture



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U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

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➤ Why should you save your seeds?

- Save money
- Share with friends
- Have seeds of plants that work well in your environment
- Some plants are hard to find
- Beneficial for preserving local genetics
- Ecotype





Wild Collecting Considerations

- Collect from large sources for ethics and genetics. Harvest *no more* than 5-10% of a wild population.
- You must have permission from landowner/entity
- Do not collect seed from public parks, recreation areas, or other public regions
- It is illegal to collect seed from any plants that are considered rare, threatened, or endangered species in Maryland without a permit.





➤ What type of seed?

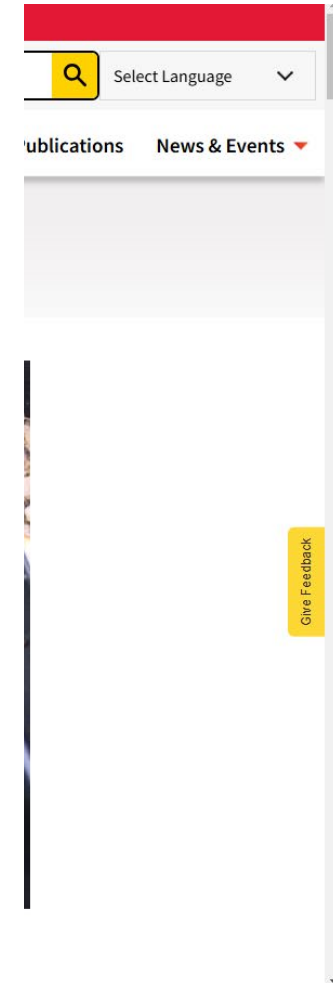
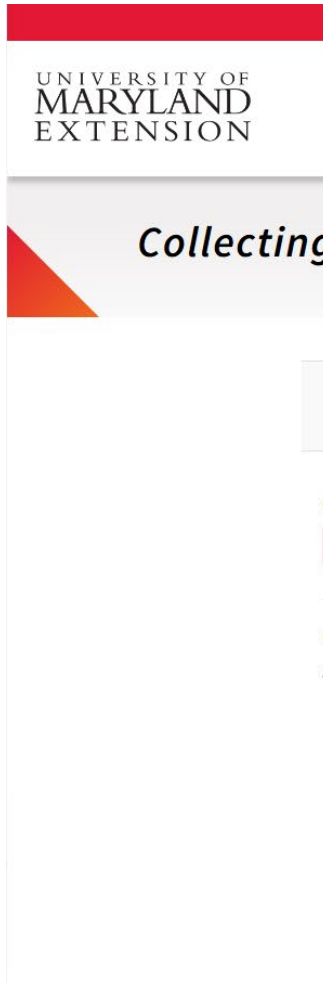
- Annual
 - Bears seeds the same year they are planted
 - Typically, does not overwinter, may self-seed
- Biennial
 - Grows foliage first year and seeds in the second year
- Perennial
 - Regrows from root system every year
 - May not flower in the first year



What should I collect?

- Easy to grow species:
 - Bottlebrush grass (*Elymus hystrix*)
 - Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)
 - Purple lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*)
 - Northern sea oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)
 - Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)
 - Cutleaf coneflower (*Rudbeckia laciniata*)
 - Wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)
 - Lyre-leaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*)
 - White wood aster (*Eurybia divaricata*)
 - Golden groundsel (*Packera aurea*)
 - Blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*)

<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/collecting-sowing-native-plant-seed/>





➤ Materials



- Pruners, loppers, or scissors
- Garden gloves
- Paper bags, mesh bags/organza sachets
- Labels or marker





➤ Collecting

- Mesh bags can be placed over drying seed heads after blooming if there are concerns other animals get to the seeds before you do, or to catch pods that spring open
- Seed heads should be dry before collecting
- Don't go collecting after a rain event
- Don't collect green seeds
- Cut seed heads off and place head down in paper bag
- LABEL your bags





➤ Preparing & Cleaning



- Remove extra plant material leaves, stems...
- Mesh sieves can be helpful but not necessary
- Winnowing – using air current to remove chaff
- Debearding – removing hair-like appendages from seed
- Threshing - separate seed from seed head mechanically or physically





➤ Labeling and Storing

- Label seeds
 - Date (year) and location collected
 - Name, scientific and common
- Store seeds
 - envelope, jars, plastic containers/bags
 - Dry
 - Away from pests
 - Out of the light





Fruit Types

- Dehiscent Fruits
 - Fruit splits open to disperse seed
- Indehiscent dry fruits
 - Fruit retains seed and dispersed together with seed
- Indehiscent fleshy fruits
 - Fleshy fruits entice animals to eat and spread seed



Follicle



[Rob Routledge, Sault College, Bugwood.org](https://bugwood.org)



[Ansel Oommen, Bugwood.org](https://bugwood.org)



Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)

Achene/Cypsela and Pappus



New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)

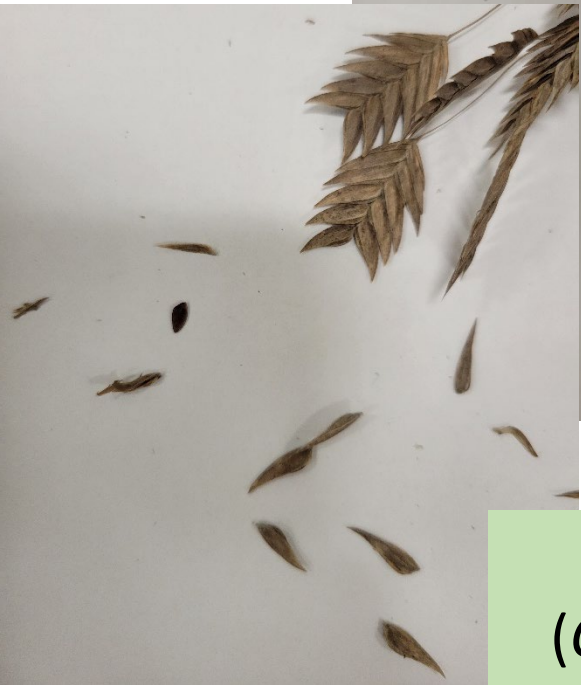


[Daniel Sollenberger, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Bugwood.org](#)

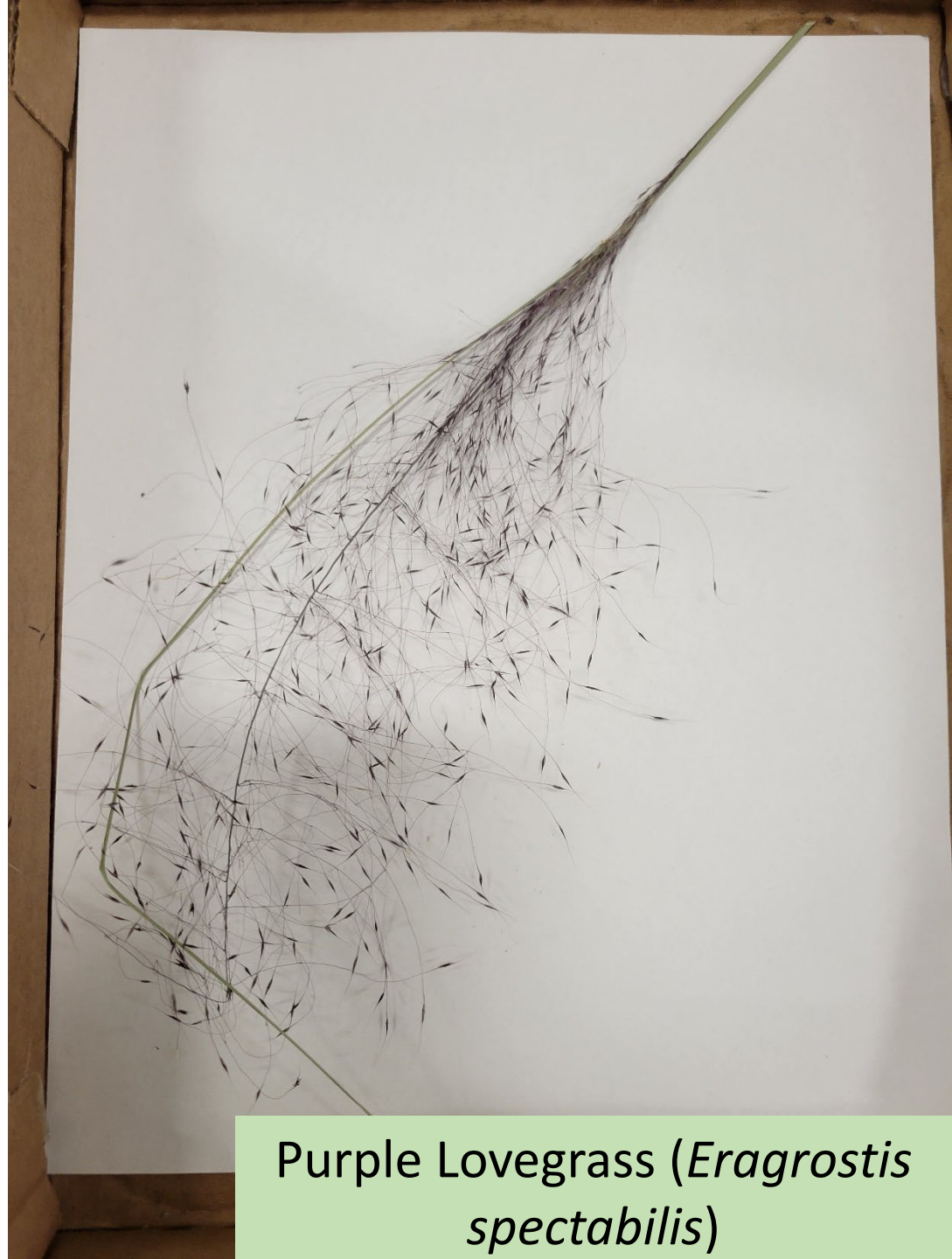


Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*)

Caryopsis



Indian Wood Oats
(*Chasmanthium latifolium*)



Purple Lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*)

Schizocarp/Nutlet

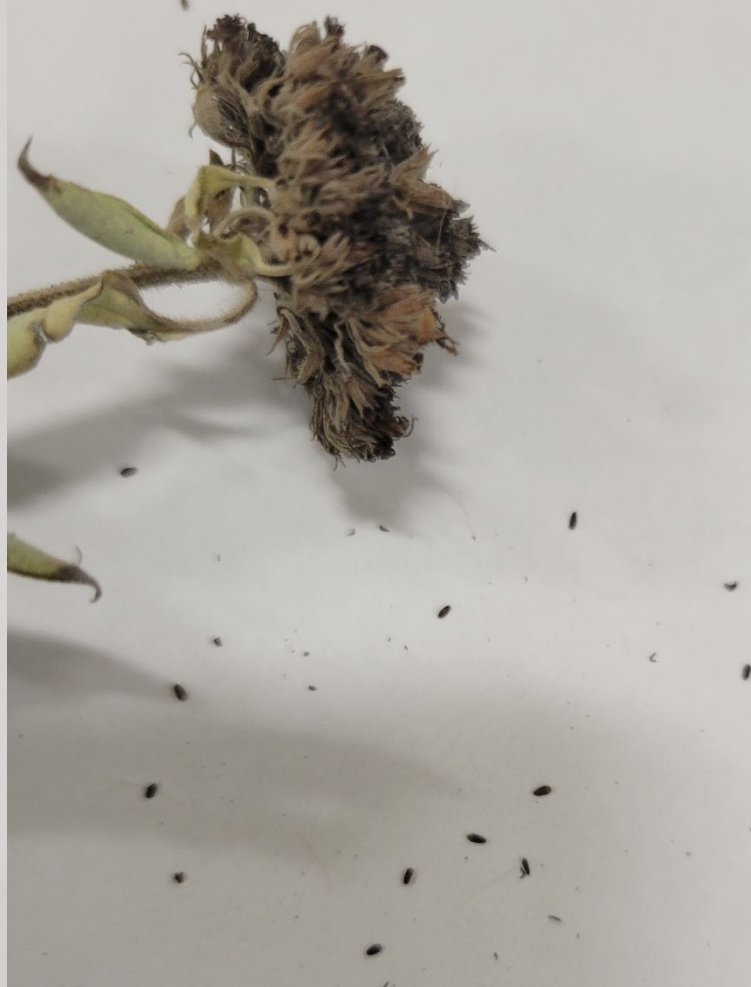


Lyreleaf Sage (*Salvia lyrata*)



[Rebekah D. Wallace, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org](https://bugwood.org/)





Capsule



Hoary Mountainmint (*Pycnanthemum incanum*)

Capsule



[John Ruter, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org](http://JohnRuter.UniversityofGeorgia.Bugwood.org)

Foxglove Beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)
'Huskers red'

Winter Sowing in Jugs



1. Collect & wash jugs.
Discard cap



2. Punch 4-6
drainage holes in
bottom



3. Cut jug in half
leaving a hinge

4. Label with weather
resistant marker



5. Put 3-4" of
moist grow mix in
bottom of jug



6. Scatter seeds on top of
grow mix. Cover lightly
with soil.
Mist lightly



7. Duct
tape jug
together



10. Transplant
when seedlings are
at least 2" tall

8. Set jugs outside where
rain/snow can enter top.
Water if needed

9. Open jug in spring after
seeds sprout
& danger of frost ends



CSM La Plata Library : Seed Library

- Open for fall through Oct 31st
- Anyone welcome to come get seeds
- Information about location and hours: <https://libguides.csmd.edu/seeds>
- Current availability not reflected on website. Has variety of natives and some fruit, veg, herbs



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QR Code to
website



Resources

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go.umd.edu/hgic



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go.umd.edu/mg



LOCAL
PROGRAMS

go.umd.edu/mglocalprograms

MASTER GARDENER
HANDBOOK

go.umd.edu/mghandbook

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go.umd.edu/mgnativeplants



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Resources

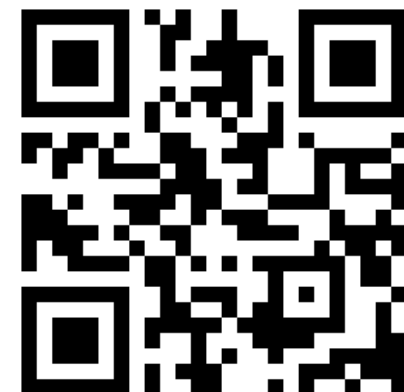
- Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia: [Illustrated Glossary](#)
- [Tallgrass Prairies Center](#)
- University of Maryland Extension: [Collecting & Sowing Native Plant Seed](#)
- University of Minnesota Libraries The Science of Plants: [8.1 Fruit Morphology](#)
- Xerces Society: [Collecting and Using Your Own Wildflower Seed](#)

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University of Maryland Extension
Master Gardener Program
Charles County

Please help us improve our programming!
Take our brief survey at
<https://go.umd.edu/mgevaluation>



Label Your Seed Packets

- Date
 - 2025 (just year is fine)
- Location collected
 - Charles County or Bel Alton
- Name: scientific **and** common