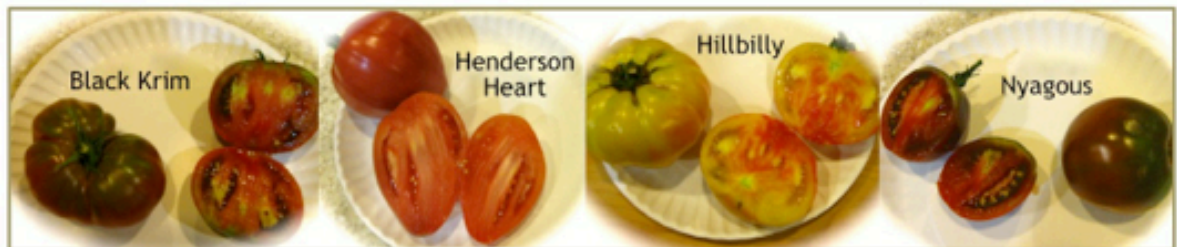


## Saving Tomato Seeds

Having enjoyed about two months' worth of tomatoes, you've probably decided which of your varieties you'd like to grow again. If you're growing open-pollinated varieties, you can save the seeds for planting next year. Unlike hybrids, open-pollinated varieties breed true to seed.

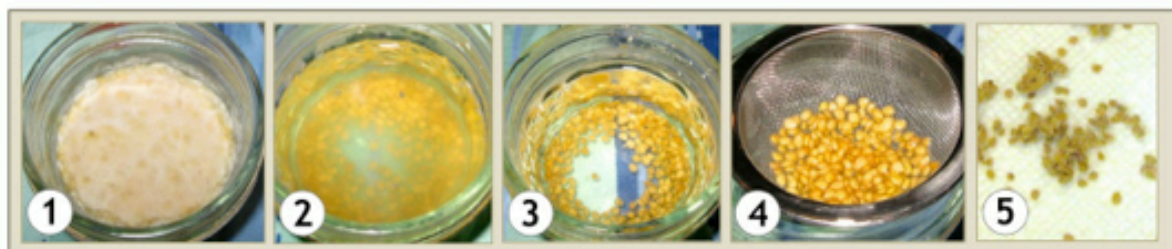


To ensure a good genetic mix, use the best tomatoes from a number of plants of each variety. Start with ripe or overripe tomatoes.

Cut each tomato in half at its equator, squeeze out the jelly-like substance that contains the seeds, and place in a labeled jar. Add a little water, loosely cover the jar, and place in a warm location (60-70 degrees) out of direct sunlight for about three days. Stir once a day.

After a couple of days, a layer of fungus will form on the top of the mixture (photo 1). This fungus breaks down the gel coating that has kept the seeds from germinating and it also produces antibiotics that help to control seed-borne diseases. Viable seeds are heavier and will sink to the bottom of the jar.

After three to four days, skim off the moldy layer and fill the jar with water. Let the contents settle and then begin pouring off the water along with pieces of tomato pulp and the immature seeds floating on top, retaining the viable seeds on the bottom (photo 2). Repeat the process of adding and pouring off water until the water is almost clear and the seeds are clean (photo 3). Drain the seeds in a fine strainer (photo 4) and spread on a screen, paper towel, or newspaper (photo 5). Allow the seeds to dry completely. Once dry, separate the clumps into individual seeds and store in a labeled jar, envelope, or bag.



More information on saving tomato seeds is available on the [Kitchen Gardeners International](#) and [International Seed Saving Institute](#) web sites.