

Seed Collecting

By Sheri George

I LOVE to collect seeds! Have since I was a little girl, although I never planted them to watch them grow, but was intrigued with the shapes, colors and textures of the seeds themselves. (Thought they should be used for money.) I still love them for that reason but now I have the joy of anticipation in them germinating and being able to plant them in my garden and to share with friends. Some I don't keep for myself. Every now and again a person will tell me that I will never be able to get a certain plant to germinate and grow...nothing I like better than a challenge! It ends up being a plant that I don't want in my garden but I do find good homes for them.

The seeds that are out there right now include Redbud trees, baptisia capsules hanging on, cardinal flower, turtlehead, sunflower, perhaps still some buckeyes, coneflower, swamp hibiscus, walnuts, hickory, oak, balloonflower, petunias (not hybrids), moonflower, impatiens (not hybrids), ageratum, Japanese anemone and blackberry lily. I am positive I am leaving many out, but these are the ones I can think of with my tired brain. The best time to collect seed is when Mother Nature is getting ready to let them drop. The stem, pods, seeds are usually brown. If you collect them too soon, then they usually don't germinate and if they do, the plants are weak and prone to problems. It is necessary to collect seeds when they are dry too because if they have been subjected to a lot of rain, then they usually get diseased and are ruined. Sometimes I have had luck in drying them out, but it is easier just collecting on a dry day. When I bring them inside, I spread the seeds out on newspaper and let dry for about a week before I separate the seeds from their pods, shells, capsules...getting just the seed is sometimes very tedious but in the same breath, very rewarding. Some store the seeds in the refrigerator in glass jars but I just put them in MARKED envelopes (you will forget what they are, trust me) and store them in a drawer in the kitchen. Just don't want the seeds anywhere near moisture. I put the little silicone packs from shoes in the envelopes if I am not positive they are dry enough. Then I wait until January until I crank up the greenhouse and let the magic begin!!!!
