



Heritage Wheat Conservancy

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Seed-saving has been the right and responsibility of farmers since the emergence of agriculture. Access to seed biodiversity is the foundation of our daily bread. Let us work together to conserve and restore diverse, regional farmers' landrace varieties that have the resilient traits to adapt to climate change, many that yield higher in organic fields than conventionally-bred wheats, and are certainly more delicious!

Guidelines for Restoring Heritage Wheats

Planting Instructions:

Plant winter wheats in the first week in September. Plant spring wheats as soon as the ground is thawed. Plant in deeply dug beds with balanced fertility with composted manure and organic mineral amendments. Plant 2" deep at a spacing of 12 inches in all directions to encourage good root development and extensive tillering to support the plants to reach their full potential. Plant in beds that have had a cover crop or vegetables the previous season. In subsequent years varieties will be screened under typical field conditions to select resilient plants best adapted to local conditions and New England's weather extremes. Rogue out weak or diseased plants. Label varieties carefully. Keep records of the seed source, planting and harvest dates.

Broadcast with low-growing clover to suppress weeds, that will be a cover crop following the wheat harvest. For winter wheats, broadcast clover on the surface of the soil in early spring when the soil is moist from melting snow. For spring wheats, broadcast the clover about three weeks after planting the wheat when the grain's root systems are established.

Selecting:

As the plants grow, try to keep records and observe the following:

1. Height/Weed Suppressive Capacity The plant's ability to compete with or suppress weeds.
2. Robustness. Color, health, strength of stalks, and resistance to disease and lodging.
3. Disease susceptibility to fusarium head blight (mildewed seedheads or orange color) and leaf rust(rusty sploches on the leaves). Photos at greengenes.cit.cornell.edu/~wpest.html
4. Winter hardiness (in the case of winter wheats) - how many plants survive the winter
5. Harvest when the plant is totally dry and brown to allow the seeds to fully mature. Record harvest date and compare to date of planting.
6. Select and save the seeds only from the largest, healthiest, plumpest seedheads on the most robust plants. In this way, year by year we will adapt diverse populations from other regions to thrive in our local climate and soils.

Harvest:

In the first year, return 50% of the best of your harvest to the Heritage Wheat Conservancy to build a community seedbank. In return you will be able to receive new landraces as a gift for your important contribution to build our community seed supply. You are encouraged to share the rest of your seed (with the guidelines) with other growers interested in trialing and selecting varieties to thrive in our region.

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