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How Long Can Seeds Last in Storage?

Some seeds will remain viable in storage for several years if stored under optimal conditions — namely, low humidity and low temperature (42°F /15°C). A simplified rule for success is that the sum of the temperature (°F) and percent relative humidity should be less than 100. The actual storage life will depend upon the viability and moisture content of the seed when initially placed in storage, the specific variety, and the conditions of the storage environment.

We recommend keeping seeds in a sealed glass jar in the refrigerator. Include a desiccant in the jar.

If your seed has been stored for any length of time, you may wish to test a sample of seeds to see if it still germinates well. Place some seeds between two damp pieces of paper towel, enclose them in a zip-lock sandwich bag, and place in a temperature-controlled environment suitable to the variety's specific germination requirements. (Refer to the packet back or the product page on our website for optimal germination temperature.) After several days — or longer for slow-to-germinate varieties — check to see how many of the seeds have germinated.

Note, however, that both germination rate *and* seed viability can decline with age of the seed. Viability refers to the seed's ability to produce a vigorous seedling. Viability typically declines *before* germination rates decline, so it is possible for old seed to still germinate yet produce weak seedlings.

When retrieving seeds from storage, allow the container to reach room temperature before opening it. This will help prevent condensation from forming on the seeds and inside the container.

CHARTS: Average Storage Life Under Favorable Conditions

NOTE: The charts below reflect an average range derived from our experience and data gathered from expert sources (see References & Further Reading).

Your results may vary from ours, however, depending upon environmental variables and the condition of the seed prior to storage.

Please note that **all data shown here are for raw seed.**

Pelleted seed, regardless of the variety, should be used within one year, as the pelleting process diminishes seed longevity.

Average Storage Life for Farm Seed & Cover Crop Seed Under Favorable Conditions

Type	Avg Storage Life (Yrs)
Alfalfa	2-5
Barley	3-5
Buckwheat	2-5
Cowpea	3-5
Clover, Crimson	5
Clover, White	5
Millett	1-2
Oats	1-4
Rapeseed	3-5
Rye	1-3
Sorghum	1-2
Sudangrass	1-4
Vetch, common	3-5
Vetch, hairy	5
Wheat, common	3-5

Average Storage Life for Vegetable Crop Seed Under Favorable Conditions

Type	Avg Storage Life (Yrs)
Artichoke & Cardoon	1-4
Arugula	6
Asian Greens	3
Asparagus	3-4
Beans	2-4
Beets	2-5
Broccoli	3-5
Brussels Sprouts	3-5
Cabbage	3-5
Cabbage, Chinese	3-5
Carrots	3-4
Cauliflower	4-5
Celery & Celeriac	3-5
Chicory	4-5
Collards	3-5
Corn, Sweet	1-3
Cress	5
Cucumber	3-6
Dandelion	1-2
Eggplant	4-5
Endive	5
Fennel	3-4
Kale	3-5
Kohlrabi	3-5
Leeks	2-3
Lentil	1-2
Lettuce	1-6
Melon	3-6
Mustard	4
Okra	2-3
Onions	1-2
Parsnip	1-3
Peas	2-4
Peppers	2-5
Pumpkins	4-6
Purslane	3-5
Radish	4-5

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Type	Avg Storage Life (Yrs)
Rutabaga	3-5
Salsify	1-2
Soybean	3-5
Spinach	1-5
Squash & Gourds	3-6
Swiss Chard	2-5
Tomato	3-7
Turnip	4-5
Watermelon	4-5

Average Storage Life for Herb Crop Seed Under Favorable Conditions

Type	Avg Storage Life (Yrs)
Angelica	2
Anise	1-3
Basil, sweet	3-5
Borage	1-4
Caraway	1-2
Catnip	3
Chamomile	4
Chervil	1-4
Chives	1-3
Cilantro/Coriander	1-4
Cumin	1-3
Dill	1-4
Epazote	3
Fennel	1-2
Hyssop	1-4
Lavender	4
Lemon Balm	1-4
Lemon Grass	3
Lovage	1-3
Marjoram	1-4
Mexican Mint Marigold	4
Mountain Mint	4
Oregano	4
Parsley	1-4
Rosemary	1-4
Sage	1-3
Savory	1-4
Thyme	1-4
Valerian	2-3

Average Storage Life for Fruit Crop Seed Under Favorable Conditions

Type	Avg Storage Life (Yrs)
Rhubarb	1-2
Strawberry	5
Melon	3-6
Watermelon	4-5

Average Storage Life for Flower Crop Seed Under Favorable Conditions

Type	Avg Storage Life (Yrs)
Ageratum	3-5
Agrostemma	3

Type	Avg Storage Life (Yrs)
Alyssum	3-5
Ammi	2
Amaranthus	4-5
Aquilegia (Columbine)	1-2
Artemisia	1-5
Asclepias	1
Aster	1-2
Bachelor's Buttons	3-5
Bells of Ireland	2
Calendula	4-6
Carnation	3-5
Celosia	2-4
Centaurea	1-5
Coneflower	1-2
Cosmos	3-5
Dahlia	2-5
Daisy	3
Delphinium	1-3
Dianthus (Sweet William)	3-5
Didiscus	1
Digitalis	1-2
Dusty Miller	3-5
Echinacea	4
Eryngium	2
Eucalyptus	4
Euphorbia	4
Forget-me-Not	2
Gomphrena (Globe Amaranth)	3-5
Gypsophila	2-4
Hyacinth Bean	3-5
Impatiens	1-2
Larkspur	1-3
Lavender	1-3
Lisianthus	2-3
Lupine	3-5
Marigold	2-5
Matricaria	1-3
Monarda	4
Nasturtium	3-7
Nigella	3-5
Pansy	1-2
Phlox	1-3
Poppy	2-4
Salvia	1-3
Saponaria	2-5
Scabiosa	2-5
Snapdragon	3-5
Statice	1-2
Stock	4-5
Strawflower	1-2
Sunflowers	3-5
Sweet Pea	3-5
Verbena	1-5
Viola (Pansy)	1-2
Yarrow	3-5
Zinnia	2-5

References & Further Reading

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