

Seed viability chart

How many years seeds stay viable when you store them cool and dry. Check your seed packet or do a germination test.
For seed stored cool and dry. If it is older, do a germination test before sowing. “–” means our sources give no value for it.

Plant	Viable for	Source
Fruiting vegetables · 10		
Aubergine (eggplant)	4 years	University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning)
Cape gooseberry	–	–
Chilli pepper	–	–
Cucumber	5–6 years	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Melon	5 years	University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning)
Pumpkin and winter squash	4–5 years	Bundesverband der Kleingartenvereine Deutschlands (ehem. BDG)
Sweet pepper	2 years	University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning)
Sweetcorn	2 years	University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning)
Tomato	4–10 years	Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen (Ulrike Lindner)
Zucchini (courgette)	6 years	University of Illinois Extension (Jan Phipps)
Beans and peas · 6		
Broad bean (fava bean)	–	–
Bush bean	5–10 years	ProSpecieRara
Pea	3–4 years	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Pole bean	5–10 years	ProSpecieRara
Runner bean	–	–
Sugar snap and snow pea	5 years	ProSpecieRara
Cabbages and turnips · 12		
Broccoli	3 years	University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning)
Brussels sprouts	4 years	Colorado State University Extension (Ells, Bass, Whiting)
Cauliflower	4 years	University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning)
Chinese cabbage	3 years	Colorado State University Extension (Ells, Bass, Whiting)
Kale	4 years	Colorado State University Extension (Ells, Bass, Whiting)
Kohlrabi	3 years	Colorado State University Extension (Ells, Bass, Whiting)
Pak choi	5 years	University of Illinois Extension (Jan Phipps)
Red cabbage	4–5 years	Bundesverband der Kleingartenvereine Deutschlands (ehem. BDG)
Savoy cabbage	4–5 years	Bundesverband der Kleingartenvereine Deutschlands (ehem. BDG)
Swede (rutabaga)	4 years	Colorado State University Extension (Ells, Bass, Whiting)
Turnip	4 years	Colorado State University Extension (Ells, Bass, Whiting)
White cabbage	4 years	University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning)
Roots and tubers · 10		
Beetroot	4–5 years	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Black salsify	buy fresh each year	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Carrot	3–4 years	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)

Plant	Viable for	Source
Celeriac	3–4 years	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Hamburg parsley	buy fresh each year	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Parsnip	buy fresh each year	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Potato	–	–
Radish	4–5 years	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Sweet potato	–	–
Winter radish (daikon)	4–5 years	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Onions and leeks · 5		
Garlic	–	–
Leek	1–2 years	Bundesverband der Kleingartenvereine Deutschlands (ehem. BDG)
Onion	1–2 years	Bundesverband der Kleingartenvereine Deutschlands (ehem. BDG)
Shallot	–	–
Spring onion (scallion)	–	–
Salads and leafy greens · 12		
Butterhead lettuce	3–4 years	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Celery	3 years	University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning)
Endive	5 years	University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning)
Florence fennel	4 years	South Dakota State University Extension (Sheila Hillberry u. a.)
Garden cress	5 years	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Iceberg lettuce	2–3 years	ProSpecieRara
Lamb's lettuce (corn salad)	2–3 years	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Loose-leaf lettuce	2–3 years	ProSpecieRara
Radicchio	4 years	University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning)
Rocket (arugula)	3 years	University of Illinois Extension (Jan Phipps)
Spinach	4–5 years	Bundesverband der Kleingartenvereine Deutschlands (ehem. BDG)
Swiss chard	4 years	University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning)
Herbs · 15		
Basil	4 years	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Borage	1–4 years	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Chervil	1–4 years	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Chives	1 year	DLR Rheinland-Pfalz (K. Mahler)
Coriander (cilantro)	2–3 years	DLR Rheinland-Pfalz (K. Mahler)
Dill	2–3 years	DLR Rheinland-Pfalz (K. Mahler)
Lavender	–	–
Lemon balm	1–4 years	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Mint	–	–
Oregano	4 years	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Parsley	2–3 years	Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG)
Rosemary	–	–
Sage	1–3 years	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Summer savory	1–4 years	Johnny's Selected Seeds

Plant	Viable for	Source
Thyme	1–4 years	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Flowers · 5		
French marigold (tagetes)	2–5 years	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Nasturtium	3–7 years	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Pot marigold (calendula)	4–6 years	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Sunflower	3–5 years	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Sweet alyssum	–	–
Green manure · 4		
Buckwheat	–	–
Oilseed radish	–	–
Phacelia	–	–
White mustard	–	–
Perennials · 6		
Asparagus	3 years	University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning)
Globe artichoke	–	–
Horseradish	–	–
Jerusalem artichoke	–	–
Rhubarb	–	–
Strawberry	–	–

Germination test: how to do it

1. Put about three layers of kitchen paper in a jar and wet it well, without leaving standing water.
 2. Scatter 5, 10 or 20 seeds on top, depending on how many you can spare. Cover large seeds such as beetroot, sunflower or squash with a second damp layer.
 3. Rest the lid on top without screwing it on, or it will go mouldy.
 4. Fruiting crops such as tomato, pepper, cucumber or squash like it warm: on top of a cupboard in a heated room. A windowsill is too cold for them. Lettuce prefers it cool, and light germinators should not sit in the darkest corner.
 5. Check every one or two days and add water if needed.
 6. After one to two weeks most seeds have germinated; some, such as physalis, take longer. Soak beans and peas in a jar of water for 8 to 12 hours instead; they should germinate within a week.
- Then count how many have germinated. If fewer than 60% come up, better not sow it any more. At 60 to 80%, sow a little more thickly. (Dreschflegel (Alex Frittsch), LfULG Sachsen / Sächsische Gartenakademie (Regina Petzoldt))

Sources

The titles are links. Every value with its source is also online: www.beetfox.com/seed-viability-chart

1. Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen (Ulrike Lindner): Rund um die Tomate (o. J.)
2. University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension (Lindgren, Browning): Vegetable Garden Seed Storage and Germination Requirements, G2090 (Juni 2011), Table I
3. Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG): Gemüse im Gartenjahr – Hinweise und Anregungen zum Biogarten (Infoschrift 2101)
4. University of Illinois Extension (Jan Phipps): Is it okay to save unused seeds for the following year? (1. Dezember 2022)
5. Bundesverband der Kleingartenvereine Deutschlands (ehem. BDG): Keimfähigkeit von Saatgut (Blog, 01.01.2023)
6. ProSpecieRara: Grundlagen Gemüse-Samenbau (nach Frank Adams, o. J.)
7. Colorado State University Extension (Ells, Bass, Whiting): Storing Vegetable and Flower Seeds, Fact Sheet 7.221, Table 1
8. Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG): Pastinake (Infoschrift 2157)
9. Johnny's Selected Seeds: Seed Viability & Seed Storage Guidelines (Storage Charts)
10. South Dakota State University Extension (Sheila Hillberry u. a.): How to Store Leftover Garden Seeds (aktualisiert 1. Mai 2024)
11. DLR Rheinland-Pfalz (K. Mahler): Anbau- und Sortenhinweise für den Gemüseanbau in Rheinland-Pfalz – Dill 2024/2025 (Stand 30.01.2024)
12. DLR Rheinland-Pfalz (K. Mahler): Anbau- und Sortenhinweise für den Gemüseanbau in Rheinland-Pfalz – Koriander, Blatt 2024/2025 (Stand 12.01.2024)
13. DLR Rheinland-Pfalz (K. Mahler): Anbau- und Sortenhinweise für den Gemüseanbau in Rheinland-Pfalz – Schnittlauch 2024/2025
14. Bayerische Gartenakademie (LWG): Basilikum – ein königliches Kraut (Infoschrift, o. J.)
15. Dreschflegel (Alex Frittsch): Keimtestanleitung (o. J.)
16. LfULG Sachsen / Sächsische Gartenakademie (Regina Petzoldt): Krankheiten und Schädlinge beim Anbau von Küchenkräutern im Garten (Stand Februar 2009)
17. Gartenakademie Rheinland-Pfalz (DLR): Allgemeines zum Samenkauf (o. J.)
18. Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde: Grüne Schriftenreihe 278 – Fachberatung I, Nachwuchs im Kleingarten (2022)
19. ARCHE NOAH Magazin 4/2015 (Florian Luf): Ab ins Glas! (Saatgutlagerung)
20. Dreschflegel: Über den Umgang mit dem Saatgut (o. J.)
21. Saatgutverordnung (SaatV), Anlage 6 (zu §§ 40 und 42 Abs. 1): Kleinpackungen – Höchstmengen und Kennzeichnung
22. LALLF Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Anerkennungsstelle für Saat- und Pflanzgut: Verpackung und Kennzeichnung von Kleinpackungen mit Gemüsearten „Bunte Tüten“ (Stand 2025, Datei Hinweis Gemüsesaat 2026)