

## Saving Flower Seeds Saves Money

When Joan Dorsett plants the vast flower gardens that cover about 2 acres around her home in Northern Idaho, she doesn't worry about the cost of seeds. That's because she collects and saves all the flower seed she needs from one year to the next. With her abundant supply of seeds, she can afford to be generous come planting time.

"Packaged seeds are pricey," she says. "With some varieties, you can get as few as 12 or 14 seeds in a package, and it can cost \$1.59 to \$1.79.

"I have been saving seeds from my flowers for about eight years. Planting flowers is just something that I love to do and I've always enjoyed being resourceful," she says.

According to Dorsett, the secret to successfully saving high-germination seeds is getting them "good and dry." It's best if they can do most of their drying on the stem, but close attention must be paid in order to collect them at the right time or they'll end up on the ground.

One of the flowers that Dorsett grows a lot of is marigolds. Thanks to her ample seed supply, she plants a 40-ft. by 3-ft. hedge made with one row of tall Cracker Jacks in the center, and a row of regular border marigolds on each side, creating a big splash of oranges, yellows and bronze.

"Our place is along the river, and I've had people come from clear across the river to see what kind of hedge it is because of the

spectacularly bright colors. They're always surprised when they see that it's just common marigolds," she says.

Dorsett also plants marigolds in her vegetable garden because they deter cabbage moths so she doesn't have to use pesticides.

"Each year I collect and use anywhere from 6 to 8 gallons of marigold seeds alone," she says. "I don't know what you'd be talking about to buy that much, but it would be a lot!"

Collecting flower seeds doesn't take very long. You can get a lot of seeds in an hour, she points out.

In the fall, when the flower heads have dried sufficiently on the stems, Dorsett snaps them off and lays them out on a sheet to dry further. Usually, the petals have fallen off and all that's left are the pods.

If the weather is warm, this can be done outside, but she usually does it indoors on a large table, or on the floor, "because you can't always depend on the weather."

"Then you move the pods around with your hands – you'll know when they're dry enough because the seeds just start falling out of the pods," she explains. "Some people dry them in the oven, but I never have, because I've had really good success with my method."

Next, Dorsett rubs them between her thumb and forefinger. Some of the chaff comes off with the seeds, which is good, she says, because it "thins the seeds down when you're



Joan Dorsett says the secret to successfully saving high-germination seeds is getting them "good and dry" on the stems before they fall on the ground.

planting and makes them easier to sow." This is especially true for tiny seeds like poppies.

After Dorsett has finished separating her flower seeds from the pods, she puts them in large bowls, pans or plastic bins where she can let them dry a little more and stir them around occasionally with her hand.

Once she feels that they're totally dry, she puts them in 1-gal. zip lock bags and places

them in a cool, dry place until spring planting begins. She uses her system on a wide variety of flower types.

"The thing I enjoy about saving seeds is being as generous as I want to when planting time comes," she says.

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## Hand-Powered Washing Machine Collection

For the past 25 years, Dorothy Riebel has been collecting old-time washing machines and other related paraphernalia. She displays her amazing collection every year at the LeSueur County Pioneer Power Show near LeSueur, Minn.

"My old time collection provides a good learning experience, especially for teenagers who may have never seen this equipment before," says Riebel. "Many people say they remember their mother or grandmother owning one piece of equipment or another. Other people just say they're glad they don't have to do it this way any more."

Besides washing machines, the collection includes irons, ironing boards, wash boards, clothes washing detergent, clothes line racks, and even toy washing machines designed for doll clothes.

Most of the washing machines on display date to the late 1800's or early 1900's. All of them are hand-powered. "I don't display machines with motors because they're too heavy to handle," she says.

Her collection got its start with a wooden Dexter washing machine. "My husband Bob and I found the machine sitting in the woods at a friend's place. It was covered with moss and dirt and the lid was missing, but it still had the brass plaque with the manufacturer's name on it. Two years went by before I decided to clean it up and restore it. Then word of mouth spread that I was collecting old washing machines, and people started giving them to me.

"At the same time I started collecting anything that had to do with old time clothes washing."

Many of the washing machines are equipped with hand cranks that are used to rock a basket inside the tub back and forth. Some have wringers attached to them. One called the Rockette doesn't have a wringer. Instead, you swing the basket up out of the water so the water can drain out. Then you rinse the clothes in a tub and wring the clothes

out by hand.

One machine is equipped with a wooden half barrel and a mechanical metal wheel, with a "dasher" inside the barrel. As you push and pull on a handle it causes the dasher to go back and forth as well as up and down.

Then there's the "stomper." It consists of a metal funnel with a handle on top and was used to wash big, heavy items like rugs, jackets, and men's overalls. "People would put two or three 5-gal. pails of soapy water into a tub. The up-and-down action of the stomper would create a vacuum and suck dirt out of the rug or jacket." "Montgomery Ward sold a stomper they called the Vacuum Washer, and there was another one named the Rapid Washer," says Riebel.

One of her favorite irons is a coal-fired model with a "chimney" at each end. You removed a lid from the top and filled it either with hot coals from a wood stove or charcoal from a fireplace, which heated a "sole plate" at the base of the iron. The iron had openings on the side that created a draft to keep the coal burning. As the coal burned it heated the sole plate.

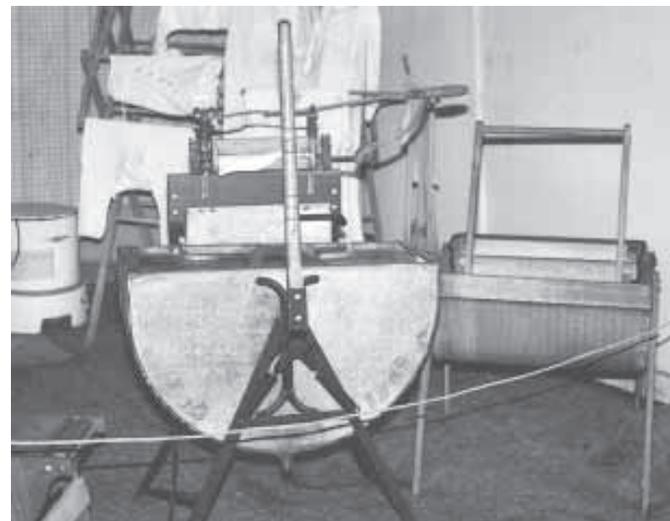
The toy washing machines were used mostly by children of wealthier families, says Riebel. One called the "Sunny Susan" has a wringer attached to one side. You could remove the lid to put doll clothes and water inside, then turn a handle on one side, which caused a dasher to go around and around and also up and down. "It sold new for \$5. Nowadays at auctions it sells for up to \$100," notes Riebel.

Most of her washboards are made from metals such as brass or zinc because they don't rust. Others are made from glass or enamel. She has different kinds of soap with names such as Oxydol, Duz, Dreft, and Surf, as well as glass bottles of Hilex bleach.

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Dorothy Riebel's collection of 1800's and 1900's washing machines started with a wooden Dexter washing machine a friend had.



Aside from washing machines, the collection includes irons, ironing boards, wash boards, clothes washing detergent, clothes line racks, and even toy washing machines designed for doll clothes.