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## Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 167 Save Seeds From Your Garden

Show Notes are at: [www.LivingHomegrown.com/167](http://www.LivingHomegrown.com/167)

- Julie: Pick what you love. Start with something you absolutely adore whether it's a tomato or a beautiful poppy that you grew. Start there. Start with something that really makes you happy. So just do a little bit of homework so that you're not frustrated and that you save them properly. But save what you love. That's really what I would tell people. Start small. Save what you love. And then, enjoy it the next year.
- Theresa: This is the Living Homegrown Podcast, Episode 167.
- Announcer: Welcome to the Living Homegrown Podcast where it's all about how to live farm fresh without the farm. To help guide the way to a more flavorful and sustainable lifestyle is your host, national PBS TV producer and canning expert, Theresa Loe.
- Theresa: Hey there, everybody. Welcome to the podcast. I'm your host, Theresa Loe and this podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without a farm. Now that includes organic, small space food gardening and artisan food crafts like canning and fermenting. It's all about the different ways that we can live closer to our food and take small, delicious steps towards living a more sustainable lifestyle. If you would like to learn more about any of these topics or my farm fresh courses or my Living Homegrown membership, just visit my website [livinghomegrown.com](http://livinghomegrown.com).
- Theresa: Well last week, we dove into the topic of backyard chicken keeping and this week we are diving into saving your own seed from your backyard food garden. I know that this is a topic that a lot of you are interested in. Whether you are a long time gardener or a brand new gardener, sometimes it can be a little intimidating or a little confusing about how to save seed so that the seed you save will give you the same plant year after year. So we're going to dive into this deep.
- Theresa: And to talk about it, I brought on Julie Thompson-Adolf who just wrote the book, *Starting and Saving Seeds: Growing The Perfect Vegetables, Fruits, Herbs, and Flowers For Your Garden*. Now this particular episode, we recorded it right at the end of September, beginning of October time but this episode will be coming out right at the beginning of November. So a lot of you might already be done with saving seed. Here in California, we are still saving seed. But I still want

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you to listen because it will explain so much of what you need to know and understand in order to save seed properly and have really good results.

- Theresa: We are going to talk about some of the benefits of saving seed. Why would you even want to? Why is it so important? We will define the different terminology that you hear such as open pollinated, heirloom, and hybrid. And we're going to talk about some different techniques for saving seed. There is dry seed saving and wet seed saving. What is the difference and why do you choose which method for which type of plants? And lastly, we will even go into how to store your seeds in the best way possible so that they last the longest amount of time.
- Theresa: And as always, I will have links in the show notes about everything that we talk about. So to get to the show notes, you just go to [livinghomegrown.com/167](http://livinghomegrown.com/167) and everything will be there.
- Theresa: Now, let me tell you a little bit about Julie. Julie Thompson-Adolf is an obsessive organic gardener and author, a nature nut, an eco-adventurer, an animal advocate, and of course, she is a seed lover. As an experienced garden and travel writer, Julie is probably best known for her brand and blog, Garden Delights. She practices a seed to table to seed approach where she's starting her plants from seeds, creating delicious meals and beautiful bouquets from that harvest, and then saving the seeds from each of those plants for next year's garden.
- Theresa: Julie's suburban micro-farm is often a site for tours and teaching. She's a master gardener serving on the National Garden Bureau's Plant Nerds Team and she is a member of the Garden Writers Association, Slow Food Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, and many other environmental and gardening groups.
- Theresa: Her book, *Starting and Saving Seeds: Growing The Perfect Vegetables, Fruits, Herbs, and Flowers For Your Garden* is just now coming out from Cool Springs Press. So at the time of this recording, it will already be out in the bookstores. Julie lives and gardens with her family in South Carolina.
- Theresa: Now before we dive into today's interview, I want you to know that today's podcast episode is brought to you by my Living Homegrown Institute which is my monthly membership site that gives you the tools you need to live farm fresh without the farm and helps you mesh together farm fresh living with our already busy, hectic lifestyle.
- Theresa: Now I realize that sometimes, you just need resources to get started so I have put together a free Farm Fresh Resource Guide for you. This guide is filled with my very favorite things from my own organic garden like my favorite tools and from my kitchen like my favorite fermenting and dehydrating tools and so much

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more. To get this PDF, just go to [livinghomegrown.com/fresh](http://livinghomegrown.com/fresh). That's F-R-E-S-H. I'm sure you'll find it super helpful on your own farm fresh journey.

Theresa: Okay, so let's dive into my interview with Julie Thompson-Adolf so you can learn all about how to save seeds from your own backyard food garden.

Theresa: Hey Julie, thanks so much for coming on the show.

Julie: Thanks so much for having me, Theresa. I appreciate it.

Theresa: Oh sure. This is a really good time of year for us to be talking about seed saving and when I saw your book, I thought ah, I had to have you on. It's the perfect topic. Not this particular episode, I think will be coming out in November so a lot of people might be done with actually saving some of their seeds. Here in California, we're still saving seeds. But on the East Coast, I know people might be done with saving seed. But we'll talk even about how to store seed. So I'm super excited about this topic.

Theresa: Now before we dive into actually talking about saving seed, I'd love for you to tell everybody a little bit about what got you into gardening and saving seeds yourself.

Julie: Sure. Basically, my dad grew up on an Ohio dairy farm and then, went off to college. Was a general manager of a petrochemical company. Never wanted to have a vegetable garden of his own but we spent so many hours on Saturdays driving around Indiana farmland looking for the perfect sweet corn. So I was always taught the importance of eating seasonally. He would never eat a tomato in December. You only eat sweet corn if it is about an hour or two out of the field. So, that was always in the back of my mind. I gardened a lot with them planting flowers and things like that. But once they made it, since they grew up during the depression, my parents grew up then, having a vegetable garden, that was a lot of work that was not romantic for them.

Julie: But as I grew up, I gardened a lot. And then, after my husband ... He's Swiss ... right after we were married, he was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. And I swear, I think it was coming over here and eating an American diet with all of the highly processed foods. I really think it was just a shock to his system. So I started growing a lot of our own food. And then, the recession hit on top of that. And I had a lot of friends, we were fine, but a lot of my friends were like how am I going to feed my family if we lose a job? And that was a shock to me. People don't understand how to grow food and I found that really disconcerting.

Julie: So I wanted to try to help my friends be a little bit more at peace, learn how to grow some food for their families so they wouldn't be so concerned. Our gardens kept getting bigger and bigger. We used them to teach people how to

grow food. People would come in ... and I live in a subdivision. We are not farmers. We are in a subdivision with less than an acre. So our gardens kept getting a little bigger. I kept doing a little more writing, teaching people how to grow food. And then, I wanted to be able to do the full cycle. So we would buy seed, nurture the babies, get them in the garden, harvest the food, cook for your family, and then save the seed so that you can continue the process the next year. There's nothing really so empowering as being able to go from seed to table and back to seed again.

Theresa: I agree with you so much and with everything that you talked about. We garden here on one tenth of an acre here in Los Angeles and it also is really satisfying to be able to share the seed with my friends. Because we aren't able to grow everything that we evolve a seed that we save because we don't have the space. And so, being able to pass those seeds onto other people which is probably what you were doing with your friends, right?

Julie: Right, exactly. It's very community building too. I think people love to ... Gardeners are so generous anyway and I think they love to share what they've grown whether it's produce or seeds harvested from that produce or flowers. I know in our garden, I have so many things that people have passed along to me and I think that's really a fulfilling thing to be able to share what you're growing with other people.

Theresa: Yeah. And it brings back memories of, I have things I got from my grandmother. And every year when I plant those things, I remember her and I'm able to pass those seeds onto her grandchildren which it definitely does the whole community building thing. But also, I think on top of that, like you said, it's about self-sufficiency. So we are able to know that by saving our seed, we're okay for next spring. And if it's something that we love, we definitely want to make sure we have that seed because sometimes the top things or something that's new or special is hard to get.

Julie: That's definitely true. I know there are certain tomatoes that if I can't have them every year, I'm going to be really angry. It's nice to be able to say okay, I'm definitely saving seeds from these. And sometimes they are crop failures for the seed companies too. There might be something that comes into play, so it's nice to be able to preserve it yourself so that you know that you'll always have it the next year.

Theresa: Ah, that's a really good point. Yes, I have actually had that happen with things that I loved. A certain poppy or certain flower that maybe they weren't able to bring back and it was a hard to find variety. So by saving it myself, then I'm guaranteed I'm going to be able to get that in my garden for the next season.

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Theresa: Well okay, let's dive into some of the terminology. Because as we talk about seed saving, everyone talks about open pollinated heirlooms and hybrids. And I think that even if you are a seasoned gardener, you can get confused. So I would love for us to go through the definitions or the terminology. Let's start with open pollinated. Can you explain what an open pollinated plant is?

Julie: Sure, of course. And I do, I think people get a little too wrapped up in all the terms and get worried about what it means. It's really so simplistic. Open pollinated are simply plants that produce when they're pollinated by insects or birds or wind or even humans, if the human intervenes a bit, or other natural sources. These plants that are pollinated within the same species, then they'll produce seeds that are genetically true to type to their parents.

Julie: So it's basically, if you have a certain species of plants and the wind pollinates them or the bees pollinate them, then you can go ahead and save those seeds and they'll produce plants that are very similar to what the seeds came from.

Theresa: Exactly. So maybe you had a squash plant that you grew in your garden and if it didn't cross with anything and it was pollinated normally by the wind or insects or whatever, then you save that seed and you will get the exact same plant the following year pretty much.

Julie: Pretty much, exactly.

Theresa: Yeah, pretty much. And we'll talk about why we say pretty much in a second. But before we move into that, let's then talk about what is an heirloom seed?

Julie: So an heirloom seed is basically an open pollinated plant but the definition kind of varies. Some gardeners consider an heirloom plant has to have been cultivated for more than 50 years. While other people say an heirloom or heritage plant is one that's significant maybe to a culture or maybe to a certain area geographically, or to a family, even a family that perhaps has cultivated a certain watermelon and passed it down from generation to generation to generation. That's where you get a little bit murky in definitions because there isn't that hard fast rule or what an heirloom is. People typically say 50 years or more in cultivation but then others kind of play with the terminology a little bit too. And I personally love talking about heirlooms that have a story behind them so that you learn where these plants have come from, what their impact was in history, how they have gotten into our gardens today. I love that definition of heirloom personally.

Theresa: Yeah. And I think sometimes what's kind of cool is maybe they come, like you said, with a family history. But also, that they were just beloved for some reason. There was something about them that made them so special that people carried them over on the boat when they came to America. Maybe it

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was flavor. Maybe it was that they were ... They had a really high yield or whatever it was. Or maybe it was something that was because it reminded them of home or it reminded them of family members. So yes, I agree with you. I think the stories are kind of fun. And there is the Seed Saver Exchange which has a lot of those stories documented. It's kind of fun to check in with them. They have newsletters. That's a great resource which we'll be sure to put in the show notes. But it's actually a lot of fun, I think. And you're right, everyone has a different definition. But to me, the fact that they're beloved for some reason, makes them special and makes them that you want to have them in your garden.

Julie: Right. And then, I think it's so important to continue to preserve those foods too because in the past 200 years, we've lost 94% of the foods that we used to grow. And I think that's kind of staggering to think that in the course of history, 200 years is a blink of an eye and we've lost 94% of the fruits and vegetables that we used to grow. So I think it's so important to take these heritage and heirloom varieties and continue to produce them so that we can continue having a better biodiversity of our foods.

Theresa: Absolutely. And that's why it really is so important that we save seed but also save seed responsibly so that we're carrying that generation forward. Now before we talk about how things can get a little bit different with the open pollinated, let's touch on hybrids. I find when I'm talking to new gardeners especially, they get nervous about hybrids because they think that means GMO. And it does not mean GMO.

Julie: Exactly, exactly.

Theresa: Yeah, explain what a hybrid is.

Julie: Sure. And I am the same way. I'm very against GMOs. And the reality is, people don't understand GMOs are not even sold to the home gardeners. That's mass farming production where those are involved. And like I said, that's not my thing. I do not want to go with the GMOs. But hybrids are completely different. Plant breeders look at the best characteristics of certain parent plants. Say perhaps, in my garden, I have high humidity. I have a terrible time with squash vine borers. Or let's say you're an apartment dweller and you want a garden but you have limited space.

Julie: So plant breeders look at these characteristics of how can I help more people garden and they need maybe smaller vines. So they'll look at a parent plant that maybe perhaps has not as long, doesn't have a 30 foot long vine for a pumpkin. Or has good disease resistance or good pest resistance. And they combine the best qualities of parent plants to produce a hybrid. And that actually, my garden is probably about 98% heirloom and open pollinated but I still have about 2%

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that are heirlooms because I look at some different needs. And I also like to test some things to tell other people what they may be able to use too in a smaller situation.

Julie: And there's a great organization, All America Selections. They trial all new hybrids, test them throughout the country, test them in different zones to see how they produce, and they basically award new hybrids, new introductions each year. And I've seen their test gardens and they're doing a lot of really good work to be able to help more people garden.

Theresa: Yes, yes. Everything you said is so spot on. That was a great, great way to explain it. And I think what would help also is for people to understand that when we're talking about GMOs or genetically modified, it means that it would not happen in nature because they're doing splicing and dicing there and changing things. So it wouldn't actually happen in nature. Where a hybrid, it is possible for that to have happened in nature. They are naturally crossing the pollination just like a bee would cross maybe two different squash varieties. That can happen in nature. So they're picking the best of one and the best of the other and pollinating them together so that they get something new that maybe has the exact characteristics that they want. But it's something ... A hybrid is something that could happen in nature. It's just that we're doing it deliberately to try and get a certain result. Where a GMO, that would never happen in nature. That's something that happens in a laboratory.

Julie: Exactly.

Theresa: So that's why they're very, very different. It's like apples and oranges, people. Except not really apples and oranges, don't get panicked.

Julie: That might have some GMO going on there.

Theresa: Yeah, you never know, right? Perfect. Now let's talk about saving seed. When we're talking about saving seed, what you're recommending that we do is we save open pollinated or heirlooms because heirlooms are generally open pollinated. So that's the seed we save because the seed will be true to the mother plant.

Theresa: Where in a hybrid, because we have a cross, if you save that seed and you plant it, you might get either parent dominating and you don't exactly get the same thing. So we don't want to save hybrids, right?

Julie: Exactly. And even if you do save ... Some seeds you might, the first generation, get something similar to the parent plant. But then the viability continues to decrease as you continue to save seeds from that parent plant, from that hybrid plant. So hybrids are really not the ones. Those are the ones you're going to ... If

you find a beautiful flower you love, you'll want to buy that each year. You won't want to save seeds from that. The open pollinated heirloom plants, those are the ones we talk about for seed saving.

Theresa: Exactly, right. Now when we started out the conversation, we said oh right, with open pollinated you generally get the exact same plant. And the reason is that sometimes nature can do a little crossing and we may get something a little off. If you plant two squash plants right next to each other and they flower at exactly the same time, the little bees are going to go from one to the other and the seed, the fruit that you get right then will look exactly like it's supposed to. But when you save the seed, the resulting planting from that saved seed might have some shifts in it. Is that how you generally explain it?

Julie: Absolutely. That's exactly how I would explain it. And I go into it a lot in the book but there is on a big scale, when we're talking about companies that are mass producing seeds for us, they have to really do something called distance isolation. And that's where you plant one crop perhaps of one variety of lettuce and you don't plant any other lettuce near it. And the distance can be staggering. It might be miles that you have to leave between those different crops. Or you have to manage it mechanically.

Julie: So for the home gardener though, most of us don't have that kind of space to be able to save seeds and to isolate like that. So there are some other ways that we can do that with bagging where basically you're putting a little mesh bag over the bud before it opens and just securing it at the bottom so that once the flower opens, you can hand pollinate it, put the bag back on, and then, once the fruit begins to ... the baby fruit starts to form or the seed has set, you can take the bag off and then harvest seed from that vegetable. It's a little bit cumbersome but if you really want to save seeds that are going to exactly what your plant was, which I consider to be important, you do have to have a little bit of isolation going on.

Julie: There's another method where you can do it with timing. Perhaps you're growing two varieties of lettuce, one flowers earlier than the other. You let the first one flower, then you sow the seeds for the next one. And you just have to stagger things a little bit. It's certainly easy to do but it's not difficult by any means. You just have to plan a little bit when you're trying to save seed.

Theresa: Exactly, exactly. I personally use the timing method most of the time because I find that most of my neighbors, even if they are growing some of the things I'm growing, they're not saving seed. So I'm usually able to still get true. I've never had any problem with it, just doing timing, I can make sure I'm not growing two squashes right next to each other. So definitely that works. Okay, cool. I wanted to make sure everybody understood that.

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- Theresa: So as we're talking about saving seed, let's dive into dry harvesting which I think is what most people are familiar with. So if we had beans, for example, if we wanted to save those seeds, it's a pretty simple process of just saving the seeds after they dry, right?
- Julie: Exactly. And I think that's such a good gateway to seed saving is to do peas or beans because there you are just letting the bean, the pod, mature on the vine. Let it dry completely. And then, harvest it. And then, you're basically shelling the beans and they're your seeds. The only trick you can run into is this time of year, of course, some places are starting to get freezes. So if you're in that situation where your vegetable is just about ready, you can harvest the entire plant, put it in a garage or a shed, somewhere that's it's not going to be frozen, get the freeze, and let it continue to mature and dry onto that plant. And then, harvest it and save the seed.
- Julie: So that's really, those are some of the most simple ones to do, beans and peas, okra. You want to wear gloves though when you harvest okra because it can be prickly. Lettuce. And then, you think about echinacea, coneflowers. When you're harvesting flowers, you're really just waiting for the seed heads to form and to dry thoroughly. And the trick there can be feeding the finches for the cone flowers. So you want to make sure ... I always leave some of them too but I also make sure that I harvest some for the following year.
- Theresa: Yeah, that's great. And I love to save my poppy seeds and with those, I put them upside down inside a paper bag because so many of the seeds just come flying out every time I bump them and they're so tiny. I would never find them.
- Julie: That's called shattering. Some plants are known to shatter and spread their seeds all over like leeks or onions and poppies especially. So that's a great method to do it. Just put a paper bag, tie it over there, hang them upside down. And then, once they're fully dry you can just almost shake them and crush the pods to release all the seeds. And they're contained that way so it's better than having them all over your house.
- Theresa: Yes. I think poppies are real easy. And beans. Beans are a great entryway to saving seed. And some of the beans are so beautiful when you save them as seed.
- Julie: Oh, they're so pretty. When we were doing the book, my friend, Libby Williams, who I've known forever. We worked in advertising together and I asked her to do the photography for the book. We're just look how beautiful these seeds are. We had a lot of fun. We were very goofy and had a good time but bean seeds are absolutely gorgeous.
- Theresa: Yeah, it's a great thing for ...

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- Julie: Just because they're so pretty.
- Theresa: Yes. And it's a good thing for kids too to let them understand the process. And then, save those seeds and plant them again. They get very excited when they understand what's really going on. And beans are big. They can hold them in their fingers. That's a great one to start. Okay.
- Julie: And I think that's pretty much where we all start out is planting that bean in kindergarten. And then, we don't know what to do with it after it sprouts but now we can help our children understand the next process, the next step in the process.
- Theresa: Yes, yes. And they're so easy to see. I remember when my kids were little, we planted some bean seeds in plastic bags with a little wet, moist cotton ball. And we stuck it to the window so they could watch each day as the sprout formed and the roots formed, and it was like this science project. But it's so fast and they can watch it and it's big and they can see the whole thing. And being little, it was fascinating to them. So always easy.
- Julie: My kids always got all of those fun science experiments too. And then, my favorite one though honestly, for anyone with kids, is to grow purple potted pole beans because those are beautiful purple beans that when you cook, turn green. So we always called them magic beans in our house.
- Theresa: Yes, yes. My kids loved those too. And it was fun to tell kids at school because we grew some of those at the school and the kids got to take ... I think each kid got three beans to take home but then they told their parents and they got to boil them. And they do, they magically change. And then, those kids will eat the beans, I swear, because they want to see what they taste like.
- Julie: I know. I know. That's a lot of fun to ... My kids were terrible, picky eaters so I would do anything I could do to possibly get them to eat their vegetables.
- Theresa: Yeah, I found if they grew it, they would taste it. So I was always conning them in ... My kids to this day love Brussels sprouts and spinach. Those are their two favorite things. And their friends are always like really? But it's like if you know how to cook it, it does taste good. And the kids, they didn't have an aversion to it because they had tried so many different things. So definitely a good way to get your kid to eat veggies. All right, awesome. That's fantastic.
- Theresa: So let's talk about the other type of seed saving though because I think a lot of people understand the dry seed saving. But there is also the wet harvest seed saving and especially if you grow tomatoes. This is really the way to save those seeds. So could you explain what is a wet harvest?

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- Julie: Sure. It's just like it sounds. So we had our dry harvest, those are just basically saving dry seeds. However, we have some things like tomatoes or cucumbers or eggplant. And the seeds are embedded in the flesh so it's really a wet process that you have to go through in order to save these seeds. And I think a lot of seed savers really want to save tomato seeds. They find some tomato that they love and they want to have it in their garden. So the nice thing about that is when you're harvesting a tomato, the seeds are right at the same time and ... They're mature at the same time that the tomato is ripe and you are ready to eat it.
- Julie: So basically, wet processing is basically just removing seeds that are embedded in the wet flesh of a fruit. It could be a melon, cucumbers, tomatoes obviously. And it's really simple. I think people get a little bit intimidated by it but it's a really simple process.
- Theresa: Yeah. And tomatoes, you're right. We all have beloved tomatoes. And for years, I didn't think I even liked tomatoes until I started eating heirloom and homegrown tomatoes and they're like night and day. And actually, my kids did end up being a little bit of tomato snobs. I remember when my kid was, maybe he was eight or nine years old and he went to someone's house and they asked him if he liked tomatoes in his salad and he said, "Are they homegrown?" And they said, "No." And he said, "Then no, I don't want any tomatoes in my salad." It was so funny when they told me. I'm like I'm really sorry. My kids a little bit of a tomato snob. But he knew the difference. And so, when you find something that you love like that, to be able to save that flesh and to save the seed is magical.
- Theresa: Now, there's something you go into a lot and that is the fermentation process. So when is it that we want to ferment a seed and why do we want to do that?
- Julie: Well, some seeds have a gel coating on them that keeps them from germinating. So just like in nature where you have your garden and perhaps a tomato fell to the ground that you didn't notice, and it rots and it decays and it naturally ferments. And then, you have a volunteer coming up in the middle of your perennials like I do right now, nature does that for us. It breaks down that gel, that protective gel coating, allowing the seed to start germinating.
- Julie: So when we're saving seeds, we're basically mimicking nature. We're doing the same sort of thing. We're doing this wet process where we are taking the seeds out of the fruit and then, we're adding a bit of water to it. First, we're kind of cleaning them off, and then adding a bit of water to the pulpy mix of seeds in their gel. And then, add a bit of water, letting it sit in a warmish environment for one to three days. And then, you'll see a layer of mold on the top. That means the fermentation process has happened. That basically that gel coating has been removed.

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- Julie: It's time to finish cleaning up the seeds which is usually a good rinse with a strainer, adding a little bit more water to make sure, first, to make sure you see the viable seeds. The ones that are hollow kind of float to the top so you can just skim those right off. And then, your good seeds sink to the bottom. So after that's done, you complete it. You pour it through a strainer, rinse it really well to remove any remaining pulp, and then, blot it dry in the bottom of the strainer. And you want to spread those out so they can dry thoroughly. So the fermentation process really ... I mean, we're mimicking nature. We're just doing that so that we can have those seeds ready to go for next year.
- Theresa: Fantastic. Yes. And so, when we take them to dry, I've always done it on a paper plate. Is that a good way to do it or do you have a better way?
- Julie: That's exactly what I do too. And the thing about saving seed that I always try to tell people is be a little careful about. To keep your seed pure, you want to make sure if you're doing four different varieties of tomatoes, make sure you keep things carefully labeled, the jar where you're fermenting it, the paper plate when you dry it, I just write right on there ...
- Theresa: That's what I do.
- Julie: ... what the variety is. But make sure to really clean your equipment. Clean your knife, clean your cutting board, clean your strainer, so that you're not getting a rogue seed in with a different variety.
- Theresa: Yeah. Okay. That's really good. And that's actually why I use the paper plate because I can just write what the variety is and the date so I can keep track of how long has it been drying.
- Julie: Exactly.
- Theresa: Fantastic. Okay, that's great. And it's not really hard. It's actually kind of a fun science experiment. I find it really fun and my kids are used to this but we've always had something on our kitchen table. There's either something ... If it's this time of year, we are fermenting our seeds, my tomato seeds, on the middle of our kitchen table. If it's in the wintertime, we always still have something growing. So if you have kids, this is a great thing to do with them. They'll get a kick out of it. And then, to be able to plant those seeds too.
- Julie: Now I do want to warn you, when you ferment especially tomato seeds, when you're doing the fermenting process, it's a little smelly.
- Theresa: Yes.

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- Julie: So I like to tell everyone it's going to be a little odorific but it's worth it in the end. And I'm the same way, our dining room ... My friends walk in and they're like oh good grief. In the dining room I have seeds and paper plates spread everywhere. It's pretty embarrassing.
- Theresa: Yes. Totally. And I find that when I've done squash seeds because I have so many, those I definitely do outside because with tomatoes I might just have a little jar. I just did one little tomato. But with the pumpkin, if I am trying to save all the seeds from a pumpkin, I do that outside because it definitely has a very strong odor. I don't want my neighbors coming in the door going what is that?
- Julie: And something to mention too that I just thought about, never dry your seeds in the oven, even if it's on the very lowest setting, because you could basically kill off your seeds.
- Theresa: Yes.
- Julie: So I just wanted to make sure that I mentioned that as well. The best thing to do to dry them thoroughly is just to put them on the paper plate. Stir them up occasionally throughout the week or two that you're drying them to make sure that all sides are getting dry. Just never put them in the oven though.
- Theresa: Ah, that's a good point. I hadn't thought of that but oh no, absolutely. You would kill them for sure. Because they are viable, living things so we have to remember that. Okay, fantastic. So now we have these seeds either that we have dry harvested or wet harvested but they have completely dried on our paper plate. What is the best way for us to store our seeds so that they last the longest?
- Julie: I think it's so simple, and I think people make it too complicated sometimes. Personally, I use little paper, craft envelopes. The small little craft envelopes. I write very carefully what variety and the date on those envelopes. Put my very dry seeds in those envelopes and seal them up. And then, you want to store them in kind of a cool, dark place. Someplace that's dry, cool, dark, so there's no chance that they'll start molding or have any kind of extraneous conditions that could harm those seeds. A bedroom closet is great. The number of seeds that I save, they're downstairs in a storage room with a lot of very big, Rubbermaid containers. So I'm a little seed obsessed. So normal people, however, could clear the space in their closet and be fine. But some of us are a little over enthusiastic in seed saving.
- Theresa: Yeah. So you don't want to store them ... Like here in California, I would never store them in my attic where it's so hot because they basically get cooked. But can you save them frozen? If they were to be in the basement and they got a little cold, they would still be okay, right?

- Julie: Sure. And some people do actually save them in the freezer. I just don't have enough freezer space. So you can definitely do that.
- Theresa: Okay, fantastic. Well Julie, this was so fantastic. This was really, really educational. I know it will help a lot of people and if they have anything in their garden that they want to save going forward, what would you say to someone who is thinking of saving seed the very first time?
- Julie: I would say pick what you love. Start with something you absolutely adore whether it's a tomato or a beautiful poppy that you grew. Start there. Start with something that really makes you happy and then, try it. And don't try to do too much the first year. I would say pick a couple things that you really enjoy and want to grow again next year. And all seeds are a little bit different. So make sure that you read up on how they like to be treated. How they like to be harvested, how mature they need to be. Some seeds need to be overly ripe and the fruit needs to be overly ripe before you can save them. So just do a little bit of homework so that you're not frustrated and that you save them properly. But save what you love. That's really what I would tell people. Start small. Save what you love. And then, enjoy it the next year.
- Theresa: Fantastic. Well, thank you, Julie, so much for coming on here and sharing everything. I really appreciate it and I'm going to have information in the show notes for your book and about you so that everybody can just very easily click right through. And I just wanted to thank you so much for coming on the show today.
- Julie: Thank you so much for having me, Theresa. This was really fun. I appreciate it.
- Theresa: Well, I hope you enjoyed that interview with Julie Thompson-Adolf, the author of Starting and Saving Seeds. Now as always, I will have in the show notes for today's episode everything that we talked about including links to Julie's book and her blog and everything else. To get to the show notes, just go to [livinghomegrown.com/167](http://livinghomegrown.com/167) and everything will be right there for you. And if you would like to get my Farm Fresh Resource Guide, I will have that on my website as well. You can get that at [livinghomegrown.com/fresh](http://livinghomegrown.com/fresh).
- Theresa: I hope you enjoyed that and you learned a little bit about saving your own seed. Until next time, just try to live a little more local, seasonal, and homegrown. Take care, everybody.
- Announcer: That's all for this episode of the Living Homegrown Podcast. Visit [livinghomegrown.com](http://livinghomegrown.com) to download Theresa's free Canning Resource Guide and find more tips on how to live farm fresh without the farm. Be sure to join Theresa Loe next time on the Living Homegrown Podcast.