Yoderbilt
EST GREENHOUSES 2011

How to Harvest Zinnia Blooms Early

FOR SEED SAVING SUCCESS



Zinnias are a gardener's favorite for their vibrant colors, easy care, and their ability to reseed for future seasons. If you love your zinnias and want to ensure you get viable seeds for next year, it's important to harvest those blooms at just the right time. In this resource, we'll explore why you should consider harvesting zinnia blooms early and how to do it properly for the best results.

WHY HARVEST ZINNIA BLOOMS EARLY?

Birds and Wildlife

Zinnia seeds are a favorite snack for many birds. When the flower heads dry out on the plant, birds can easily access and snatch them before you have a chance to collect them. By harvesting blooms early, you'll beat the birds to it!

Dew and Moisture

As fall approaches, mornings often become cooler and wetter with dew or light frost. Zinnia blooms and seeds exposed to this moisture for long periods are more prone to rot, mold, or mildew, which can compromise the seeds' quality.

Lower Temperatures

Cooler weather can delay seed drying or cause seeds to die before they're fully mature. While zinnias are warm-weather plants, once fall sets in and temperatures drop, the seeds may no longer be viable if left on the plant for too long.

Signs it's Time to Harvest Your Zinnia Blooms for Seeds



Color Fading



Petal Browning



Early Drying



How to Harvest Zinnia Blooms Early

Step 1: Select Blooms

Choose flower heads that have just started to dry. They should still have some color, but the petals will be fading, and the center of the flower will feel drier and firmer than a fresh bloom.

Step 2: Cut the Stem

Use a clean pair of garden shears or scissors to cut the stem a few inches below the flower head. It's important to cut it in late morning or early afternoon, when the plant is dry and there's no dew.

Step 3: Dry Indoors

Once you've collected your zinnia blooms, bring them indoors to finish drying. If you have a greenhouse, it is the perfect space to continue the drying process. Lay them out on a mesh screen, paper towel, or newspaper in a warm, dry place with good air circulation. I personally use hanging baskets, kraft paper covered gardening tables, plant trays etc. Due to the volume of seeds I have, they would completely take over my home. Also, avoid stacking them, as this could cause moisture buildup and mold. Ensure you have good ventilation by way of fans, and open windows. I also make sure I keep them away from watering areas as well as open windows where rain could blow in.

Step 4: Check for Seeds

After 1-2 weeks of indoor drying, the flower heads should be fully dry. Gently rub the center of the bloom between your fingers, and the seeds should fall out easily. Zinnia seeds are small, narrow, and have a pointy tip. They're attached to a thin, papery chaff that is often mistaken for the seed itself.

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Storing Zinnia Seeds

Once your zinnia seeds are harvested and fully dry, store them in a cool, dry place until you're ready to plant them next season. You can use small envelopes, paper bags, or glass jars with lids. Be sure to label each container with the variety and date collected to keep your seed collection organized.

Harvesting zinnia blooms early to collect seeds is a simple and effective way to ensure you have healthy, viable seeds for next season. By avoiding threats from birds, moisture, and cooler temperatures, you're more likely to grow vibrant zinnias again and again. Plus, early harvesting keeps your garden looking tidy and prolongs the bloom season. So, grab those shears and start collecting before the wildlife does!

Happy seed saving!

Pro Tip: Checking For Viable Seeds

- Place a few seeds on a damp paper towel.
- Fold the towel over the seeds and place it inside a plastic bag.
- Leave the bag in a warm spot, like on top of your fridge.
- Check in 7-10 days to see if any seeds have sprouted.

If most of the seeds sprout, you've got viable seeds that will grow into healthy plants next year!



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