

# Don't Waste Your Garden

Extending the growing season, Seed drying & storage &  
Cover crops



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## Extending the growing season



- Practices range from temporary to permanent, inexpensive to costly
  - Row cover/cover cloth
  - Low tunnel
  - High tunnel or greenhouse



Green Edge Gardens, Athens, Ohio

## A starting point: row cover



- Spun polyester agricultural fabric
  - Comes in several thicknesses
  - Can be used for several/many seasons
  - Provides 1-3 degrees of frost protection
- Brands: Reemay, Agribon
- Local source: A.M. Leonard in Piqua



## Row cover (cont.)



- Support cloth with hoops
  - Allows for ventilation
  - Purchase or make from coiled 9 gauge galvanized steel wire
  - Works well with 4-5' wide beds
  - Space 3' apart
- Bury edges of cloth
  - Keep cloth in place
  - Clips, pins not necessary



## Seed saving example: Tomatoes



- **Self-pollinating**
  - Most modern varieties cannot cross-pollinate
  - Potato-leaved varieties, beefsteaks, and currant tomatoes are susceptible to cross-pollination
  - If more than one potato leaf tomato (e.g., Brandywine) is grown, flowers need bagged
  - If a beefsteak produces a double fruit, do not save seed from it



Spun polyester bag



Double fruit beefsteak



Potato-leaved tomato

## Seed saving example: Tomatoes (cont.)



- **Harvest**
  - Pick and wash fully ripe tomatoes
  - Cut the fruit through the middle to expose the seed cavity
  - Squeeze the seeds and surrounding gel into a container
  - Add water (optional), it may make separating mold from seeds easier
- **Allow gel to ferment for 1-3 days**
  - Be cautious where you leave the bowl; it'll get funky
  - Each tomato seed is encased in a gelatinous sack that inhibits germination
  - Fermentation breaks down the germination inhibitor



## Seed saving example: Tomatoes (cont.)

- Clean the seed
  - Skim the mold off
  - Add water and stir. Pour pulp and immature seeds off.
  - Repeat
  - Use a strainer as necessary
  - Dry the seeds on a plate, stir to keep from clumping
- Store
  - Cool, dry area in an airtight container



## Seed drying & storage

- To check for seed dryness
  - Try to bend seed in half
  - If it breaks, it is dry enough for store
  - If it bends, continue drying
- Seed storage
  - In an airtight container
  - In a dark, cool place
  - Avoid high-humidity or swings in humidity



# Cover crops

- **Benefits**
  - Suppress weeds
  - Provide soil organic matter
  - Help nutrient retention
  - Feed microbes in your garden outside of main cropping season
- **Consider**
  - **Time of seeding**
    - ✦ Most cover crops need seeded by Sept. 15
    - ✦ Cereal rye can be seeded later
  - **Type of kill**
    - ✦ Winter kill (cold) or spring kill (tillage)



# Cover crop seed for sale

- Sold by Darke SWCD
- \$3 per pound
- 2 mixes available:
  - **Winter mix**
    - ✦ Cereal rye & radish blend
    - ✦ Covers 700 sq. ft.
    - ✦ Cereal rye overwinters
  - **Fall mix**
    - ✦ Oat & radish blend
    - ✦ Covers 640 sq. ft.
    - ✦ Both cover crops winter kill



# Thank you!



## Questions?

