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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SEED SAVING AND OTHER FALL TASKS

Autumn is upon us, and there is a chill in the air. It is time to finish harvesting the fruits of our spring and summer labor, and plan for next year. Tender crops still ripening need covered on these cooler nights (some of us have had to do this most of the season), and houseplants should be moved back indoors. There is still some time to plant some cool weather greens, such as kale or chard, in cold frames and covered tunnels.

Some tasks in the garden for September and October include: preparing beds for spring; clearing away spent plants and debris (compost or dispose of the waste); and amending garden beds with manure or compost. Now is also the time to plant some garlic for next year's harvest. September is the last chance to give perennials, shrubs, and trees a deep drink of water before winter, and to gather mulch to apply at frost time to protect them during the coldest part of the year. Most of the vegetables and fruits should be picked before frost, although root crops (potatoes, carrots, turnips, etc.) can take some frost, but these should be dug for winter use before the ground freezes solid.

It is also time to save seeds for next year's planting. Some good reasons to save seed are: thrift (it can be expensive buying new seed each year), the ability to select for plants that do well where you garden, and the satisfaction of being self-sufficient. Heirloom and open-pollinated varieties are the best for any seed-saving endeavor, as hybrids often don't seed true.

Start seed saving by choosing the earliest and best looking of your vegetables; use a twist tie or string to mark your choice. The "three sisters" (squash, corn, and beans) have some of the easiest seeds to save. Beans should be left on the plant until dry, but if frost is imminent, then pull the whole plant and hang it upside down inside to finish drying. Corn (on the cob) should be hung somewhere sheltered until the kernels dry. The same can be done with sunflower heads. Squash or melon seeds can be rinsed, dried, and saved for planting whenever you eat one. Many herbs and flowers are going to seed now; observe the seeding habits of your favorites and harvest, or

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let self-seed in the garden.

A good resource on how to save all types of seeds is *Seed to Seed* by Suzanne Ashworth. You can also help to preserve plant diversity and seed availability by joining the Seed Savers Exchange: www.seedsavers.org.

Kit Cooley has been a University of Idaho Master Gardener in Bonner County since 2008.

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