

# HOW TO HARVEST WILDFLOWER SEED

Harvesting seed from your wildflower meadow is rewarding!

## GENERAL TIPS

- ▶ Use durable, secure cloth or paper bags – not plastic – to capture seed; paper and cloth absorb moisture, which prevents molding of plant material.
- ▶ Harvest when plant material is completely dry; don't harvest wet or damp fruit or seed.
- ▶ Dried wildflower stalks may be clipped off at the base, which serves the dual purpose of removing spent material for the season.
- ▶ Place stalks upside-down in the bag; many species will dehisce (release seed) on their own.
- ▶ Alternatively, the bag may be held beneath the inflorescence of certain species and hands can be used to gently separate the seed head. The bag will capture the crumbled plant material.

## AFTER THE HARVEST

- ▶ Place bag containing plant material to dry for approximately two weeks in a cool, dry area protected from rodents.
- ▶ Airflow is important; if seed sits for long periods of time in stifling and/ or humid conditions, it will likely not maintain good viability.
- ▶ After the drying period, place seed in a clean jar and store in the back of a cool, dry cupboard until sowing season (fall).

## SPECIFICS ON HARVESTING COASTAL MIX

Different plant families exhibit a variety of fruiting forms. The “fruit” is the part of a plant that contains the seed. It can be helpful to understand how your target harvest plant goes to seed. Here is a guide for the Coastal Mix:

► *Camissoniopsis cheiranthifolia* (beach suncups)

- Family: Onagraceae (evening primrose)
- Fruiting style: capsules going along the length of the stem
- Seeding habit: capsule hardens and turns brown, then opens at the top and gradually peels open to the base to reveal chambers containing the seed; seeds are 1.2 to 1.3 mm in size and dull brown to black in color
- Best harvest method: cut off dry stems and place upside-down in bag

► *Eschscholzia californica* var. *maritima* (California coastal poppy)

- Family: Papaveraceae (poppy)
- Fruiting style: capsule at top of stem
- Seeding habit: capsule hardens and turns brown, then opens slightly at the top and eventually pops open vigorously to release the seed; seeds are 1.5 to 1.8 mm in size and brown to black in color
- Best harvest method: remove capsule from top of stem, either just before it opens at the top or before it has completely split open to the base; conduct removal over an open bag, as this action causes the capsule to pop open – and you don't want to lose the seeds

► *Gilia capitata* (globe gilia)

- Family: Polemoniaceae (phlox)
- Fruiting style: capsule
- Seeding habit: the entire inflorescence head turns brown but retains its structure, which is comprised of sections that contain the seed; once touched, the dried inflorescence crumbles readily; seeds are 2.0 mm in size and yellow to brown in color
- Best harvest method: cut off entire stems or crumble inflorescences over bag

- *Leptosiphon grandiflorus* (large-flower linanthus)
  - Family: Polemoniaceae (phlox)
  - Fruiting style: capsule
  - Seeding habit: the entire inflorescence head turns brown; seeds are 1.5 to 3 mm in size and tan in color
  - Best harvest method: cut off stems or remove/ crumble inflorescences and place in bag
  
- *Lupinus bicolor* (miniature lupine)
  - Family: Fabaceae (pea)
  - Fruiting style: pod
  - Seeding habit: pods develop along the length of the stem and turn brown upon maturity; when fully ripe, the pods split open; seeds drop immediately to shortly thereafter; seeds are 1.0 mm in size and mottled brown with a smooth surface
  - Best harvest method: remove pods when completely brown, dry and crisp – but just before they pop open; conduct the removal over an open bag to catch seeds; entire dried stems with ripe pods may also be removed
  
- *Lupinus succulentus* (arroyo lupine)
  - Family: Fabaceae (pea)
  - Fruiting style: pod
  - Seeding habit: pods develop along the length of the stem and turn brown upon maturity; when fully ripe, the pods split open; seeds drop immediately to shortly thereafter; seeds are 4.0 – 6.0 mm in size and mottled brown with a smooth surface
  - Best harvest method: remove pods when completely brown, dry and crisp – but just before they pop open; conduct the removal over an open bag to catch seeds; entire dried stems with ripe pods may also be removed