

Hilton Habitat September Harvest Instructions

*Children are welcome to take their harvest home with them along with a copy of this sheet.
Please contact the Habitat Committee if harvest is left in the shed and/or materials need to be replenished.
Also, please return supplies and tools to the place where they were found.*



Marigold Seeds – Harvest, Dry & Save for Spring Planting

Pinch off dead marigold flowers when the petals begin to dry. Marigolds are one of the few flowers that do not produce a seed pod separate from the bloom. Seeds are formed in the cup-like formation under the flower petals. Tear spent marigold flowers apart with your fingers into a paper bag (provided in shed). Seeds consist of three colored sections - the colored remnant of the flower petal, a white tubular piece and the black seed.

Allow collected seeds to dry for a few days on a screen or paper towel (seeds may be left in the shed or taken back to the classroom to dry). The flower petals and white part will continue to wilt and disintegrate, leaving the black seed. Store seeds in labeled envelopes in a glass jar or other container with a tight lid. Seeds may be started indoors or sown directly outside in the spring after threat of frost has passed.

This plant is a good weather predictor! The flowers close when rain is coming.



Common Milkweed Seeds – Harvest, Dry & Plant (While keeping an eye out for butterflies & caterpillars!)

Ripe milkweed pods start to turn brown and split open. Ripe seeds are brown. Freshly collected pods should be dried in an open area with good air circulation. Once the pods are thoroughly dry, the seeds can be separated from the coma, or silk-like ballooning material. Strip the seeds and coma from the pods into a paper bag (provided in the shed). Shake the contents of the bag vigorously to separate the seeds from the coma and then cut a small hole in a corner of the bottom of the bag and shake out the seeds. Store dried seeds in a cool, dry place protected from mice and insects - a plastic bag (reclosable) or other container in the refrigerator works well. Seeds may be sown outdoors during the fall (ideally November) in the Habitat near the other common milkweed plants.

Monarch butterflies are specific to milkweed plants; this is the only type of plant on which the eggs are laid and the larvae will feed and mature into a chrysalis. Chemicals from the milkweed plant make the monarch caterpillar distasteful to most predators. Eggs are laid on the underside of young, healthy leaves.



Goldenrod – Harvest, Dry and Use in Flower Arrangements

Ideally the flowers should be cut just before being fully open. Tie several cuttings together (string available in the shed) and hang upside down in a warm, dark, dry place (there are nails in the overhead beam in the shed for this purpose if needed). The darkness helps preserve the flower color. This was the method used for drying flowers in America by the English colonists.

Goldenrod is often blamed for causing hay fever because it flowers during allergy season. However, the true culprit is ragweed (*Ambrosia* spp.). Goldenrod flowers are mainly insect pollinated, so the flowers are showy to attract insects and the pollen is relatively heavy and sticky compared to that of ragweed. It is unlikely that the wind-blown allergens affecting hayfever sufferers include appreciable amounts of goldenrod pollen.



Lavender – Harvest, Dry & Use in the Bath

Trim back the lavender in the Habitat herb garden, which keeps the plant neat and compact. Dry the stems for several days in a warm, dark, dry place. Use rubber bands when hanging lavender to dry since they will contract along with the drying stems (there are nails in the overhead beam in the shed for this purpose if needed). Or spread loose plant material in a single layer on a screen.

The Greeks and the Romans bathed in lavender scented water and it was from the Latin word "lavo" meaning "to wash" that the herb took its name. Make your own lavender scented bath by filling a linen or muslin sachet bag with dried lavender and placing it below the hot water faucet. Powdered milk or finely ground oatmeal may also be placed in the sachet.



Chives/Garlic Chives – Harvest, Wash & Eat

These plants are in the herb garden. Harvest leaves over 6" long by hand - simply pick them off at the base. Seal in plastic baggies for students to take home. Wash, chop & use fresh in salads or to garnish soups. May be added to recipes for the last 5-10 minutes of cooking.

Chives have purple flowers in mid-spring. Garlic chives have white flowers in late summer. The leaves of garlic chives are flat, solid and paler green than those of chives, and taste and smell of mild garlic.