

DRYING SUNFLOWER, PUMPKIN AND OTHER SEEDS

Roasted seeds are good sources of proteins and carbohydrates. Commonly available in health food stores and in the bulk food section of grocery stores, these increasingly popular snacks are far from cheap. Fortunately, you can grow many of these in your own garden. Sunflowers, pumpkins, winter squash and melons provide seeds that can be roasted.

Collect sunflower seeds by cutting the flower heads off when the seeds seem loose. Work fast or the birds may beat you to them. Hang the flowers upside down to dry with a newspaper beneath them to catch any seeds that drop. When totally dry, most seeds should come loose when you run your hands over them.

Separate the fibers and wash pumpkin, squash, or melon seeds before roasting them. Allow them to air dry for a few days. Select only plump, mature seeds for roasting.

You can hull the seeds either before or after roasting. Pre-hulled seeds minimize the mess with children and for work-time snacks. Hulling the seeds by hand as you eat them requires more work and time. This may encourage dieters to eat smaller quantities.

If you decide to pre-hull the seeds, break the shell with a rolling pin. Then drop the seeds into water and stir well. The seeds will sink while the shells float. Dry the kernels well. They can be stored in this state or roasted.

To roast, mix either hulled or un-hulled seeds at the rate of one cup of seeds to two tablespoons of vegetable oil. One teaspoon of salt, as well as garlic, may be added, if desired. Spread the seeds on a baking sheet and bake them at 325 degrees Fahrenheit for 2-6 minutes, turning the seeds until they are golden brown.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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