Although seeds are dormant, they each contain a living plant inside! Although seeds can live for several years if stored under the right conditions. Different varieties of seeds will have different life spans so be sure to look up how long your seeds will last before you plan to store them. You will want to

To store seeds until the next growing season: Store your seeds in a brown paper bag, or in a bucket or jar with a loose lid. Keep your seeds in a cool, dark location with low humidity.
To keep seeds safe to plant in a few weeks: Keep seeds dry and avoid extreme temperatures (for example: do not leave them in your car or outside).

Germinating Seeds:

The first step to germination is to rehydrate the seed. Once a seed has soaked up all the water it needs, it will begin to germinate at the right temperatures. Most seeds ideally germinate between 80-85 degrees Fahrenheit but will still germinate (just slower) at temperatures above or below the ideal range of 80-85 degrees Fahrenheit. If a seed fully dries out after the germination process has begun, it may not survive. Be sure to take extra care and keep your seeds moist until it has grown roots and leaves.

Troubleshooting Germination:

Unless collected from your own garden, there is very little chance you could purchase bad seed. The most common reasons seeds do not germinate is under watering, over watering, or cold temperatures.

If your seeds are not germinating in the Learning Garden, they most likely will need to be watered more frequently or less frequently to see better germination results. If you have over watered, your seeds will soften and mold. Cold day or night time temperatures will slow seed germination significantly. Wind and sun may dry the top layer of soil in your garden within a day. Check the temperature and soil moisture 1-2 inches deep each day with a finger. If you are still unsure as to why your seeds have not germinated, consider reaching out to your local garden educator.

Thinning seeds after Germination:

To ensure you grow strong and large vegetables, you may want to plant a few more seeds than you intend to grow. Once all the seeds have sprouted, pull out the extra plants (starting with the weakest plants) and leave the seedlings that you think will grow into the strongest at a healthy spacing.

Sourcing Seeds:

Big Green, in partnership with Johnny’s Seeds and local seedling growers provide enough seeds and seedlings for you to fill your Learning Garden each year. If you would like more seeds, or if you are growing different foods than we provide, many seed companies have a wider selection, and many even donate to schools!