



## Seed Buying: A Glossary for the Beginner

*Confused by terms on a seed packet?* This glossary will help:



**Hybrid (F-1):** An “F-1”, or first generation hybrid, occurs when a breeder selects two pure lines (plants that produce identical offspring when self-pollinated) and cross-pollinates them to produce a seed that combines the desirable characteristics or “traits” from both parents.

**Open Pollination:** Pollination that occurs by natural mechanism among individual plants with no control so that the male (pollen source) is unknown. This sometimes results in wide genetic variation in genetic traits in the offspring; however, in crops that naturally self-pollinate and whose traits breed true, open pollinated offspring are nearly identical with very rare off-types.

**Variety:** A naturally occurring population of individuals constituting a subdivision of a species. Varieties occur in nature and most varieties are true to type. That means the seedlings grown from a variety will also have the same unique characteristic of the parent plant.

**Cultivar (cultivated variety):** A group of cultivated plants that are clearly distinguished by a characteristic that is retained when plants are propagated. Cultivars are not necessarily true to type. A seed grown cultivar can be either a hybrid or open-pollinated variety. Although technically different, variety and cultivar are commonly used synonymously.

**Heirloom:** A crop variety or cultivar documented to have been in cultivation for 50 years or longer (some classify heirlooms as developed before WWII) and is open pollinated in origin.

**Organic:** “Certified Organic” on a seed packet has a distinct legal meaning. It can only be used for seed for growers who are in compliance with regulations specified by the USDA. Organic seeds are grown strictly without the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

**Treated/Untreated:** Seeds labeled “treated” are generally dusted with a fungicide or an insecticide. This is different than pelleted (coated) seed.

**Pelleted (Coated):** Seeds that are pelleted are coated with an inert clay-like material, which makes them uniform in size and thus makes the process of handling and seeding them much easier.

**Inoculated:** The introduction of beneficial bacteria (using a powdered form of the bacteria) to legume seed to ensure formation nitrogen fixing nodules on the roots.

**Non-MTO:** Lettuce seed that has not been tested for Lettuce Mosaic Virus.

**Primed:** A process whereby seed is manipulated to expand the temperature range and speed of germination, as well as additional priming to break light dormancy when needed. Many lettuce seeds, for example, are primed to enhance germination.

**PVP:** Plant Variety Protection provides a form of intellectual property rights by which plant breeders can protect their new varieties in the same way an inventor protects a new invention with a patent.

**Resistant/Resistance:** Implies that a variety has a certain amount of resistance when exposed to a disease-causing pathogen such as a fungus, bacteria, or virus.

**Tolerant/Tolerance:** Implies that a variety will perform relatively well when exposed to environmental stresses such as cold weather, hot weather, or drought.

**Seed Lot:** A group of seeds that's been together through the same conditions, a “batch”.

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