

Thanks To Seed Savers, Glass Gem Corn Exists

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Glass Gem corn is an old variety of corn with kernels that come in an absolutely stunning array of colors. (Photo: timlewisnm [\[CC BY-SA 2.0\]](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/)/Flickr)

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This stunning, multi-colored corn is real and edible, and its seeds are now in high demand. It's a good thing someone spent time saving the seeds over the generations when the variety was out of our collective consciousness.

This multi-colored corn was brought back into our collective consciousness a few years ago when a photo of it went viral. [Business Insider](#) has the story of this corn (along with some beautiful photos) that an Oklahoma farmer named Carl Barnes has been growing for many years. He's half-Cherokee, and he wanted to reconnect with his heritage, so he exchanged Native American corn seed with people from all over the country and started growing corn with seeds the colors of the rainbow.

His efforts were successful but went under the radar until 1994 when another farmer named Greg Schoen obtained some of this rainbow corn seed from Barnes and grew it himself. His photo of a particularly beautiful ear of corn went viral in 2012, and now demand for the seeds is high. [Native Seeds sells Glass Gem seeds](#) for \$7.95 for a 50-seed packet, and the seeds they sell come directly from the seed gifted to them from Schoen. Anyone can now grow this beautiful variety, save the seeds, and pass them on, to make sure these seeds don't get forgotten again. By saving the seeds from specific-colored kernels, people have been able to play with the colors, creating new color combinations in the Glass Gem corn.

This corn isn't the type you'd slather with butter, sprinkle with salt, and chomp into on a summer evening. It's tougher than that, so it's used for popcorn and for grinding into cornmeal. The story of how Glass Gem corn was rediscovered is important because it highlights the need to save seeds and [swap seeds](#) with others to keep produce varieties alive.

The importance of saving seeds



Glass Gem corn is an example of the fruits and vegetables that we're in danger of losing. (Photo: ThomasLENNE/Shutterstock)

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According to [Food Tank founder Danielle Nierenberg](#), there are about 100,000 global plant varieties (edible and non-edible) that are endangered. Saving seeds and making sure that a large variety of plants continue to thrive is important for agricultural biodiversity, but its importance goes further.

Saving seeds doesn't only help improve agricultural biodiversity, but helps farmers and researchers find varieties of crops that grow better in different regions, especially as the impacts of climate change become evident. Many farmers groups, nonprofits, and governments are conserving crops in their own communities — there are currently more than 1,000 known seed banks, collaboratives, and exchanges around the world.

Food Tank has a list of [15 seed-saving initiatives](#), including several that you can purchase seeds from. You can also go to a local seed swap or swap with others online. Once you get your seeds, the idea is to grow the plants, save the seeds, keep some for yourself and swap or give to others to perpetuate the diversity of seeds that are in circulation.
