



# USE OF ORGANIC SEEDS IN ORGANIC CROP PRODUCTION

## Guidance

---

National Organic Program regulations require that the producer use organically grown seeds, annual seedlings and plant stock, except that non-organically produced, untreated seeds and planting stock may be used when an equivalent organically produced variety is not commercially available.

### DEFINITIONS

- Annual seedling- A plant grown from seed that will complete its life cycle or produce a harvestable yield within the same crop year or season in which it was planted. (205.2)
- Commercially available- The ability to obtain a production input in an appropriate form, quality, or quantity to fulfill an essential function in a system of organic production or handling, as determined by the certifying agent in the course of reviewing the organic plan. (205.2)
- Planting stock- Any plant or plant tissue other than annual seedlings but including rhizomes, shoots, leaf or stem cuttings, roots, or tubers, used in plant production or propagation. (205.2)

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

#### SEED AND PLANTING STOCK

Your seed and planting stock must be organic, “unless commercially unavailable.” Planting stock includes rhizomes, shoots, leaf or stem cuttings, roots or tubers. These are your onion sets, seed potatoes, sweet potato slips, garlic bulb and strawberry crowns. Asparagus crowns, raspberry canes and orchard trees are in this category as well.

- There is no allowance for seed treated with prohibited materials! Captan, Thimet, and similar chemical fungicides are NOT on the national list and are not permitted. PLEASE TAKE THIS SERIOUSLY. If your seed is covered in a pink or orange powder, it is probably prohibited! We may not be able to certify your crop if you use seed treated with prohibited materials.
- Seeds used for edible sprout production must be organic, no exceptions!

#### ANNUAL SEEDLINGS

ANNUAL SEEDLINGS MUST BE ORGANIC. There is no exception in the rule for commercial unavailability! A temporary variance may be granted by the USDA for natural disaster, research trials, etc. Don't confuse this with commercially unavailable! Note: Onion plants are annual seedlings, not planting stock, so they must be certified organic.

#### PERENNIAL PLANTS

Perennial planting stock must be managed organically for at least 12 months prior to being sold, labeled, or represented as organic. Note: ALL planting stock, whether it is an annual or perennial is subject to the commercial availability requirement.

#### COMMERCIAL AVAILABILITY

The first step is to determine if an equivalent organically produced variety is available. By equivalent variety, look

for comparable growing habits, days to maturity, insect and disease resistance, flavor and other important qualities. If a suitable equivalent variety is not available organically, note where you tried to look for organic seed, as that is important for your certification records.

Once you have found a source for a specific equivalent organic seed, the next step in determining commercial availability is to see if it is in:

- Appropriate form- such as sized, graded, pelleted, hot water treated, etc.
- Quality- you may want to try a small quantity the first year to make sure it does well under your particular conditions. If the only seed available organically is of inferior quality, then it may be acceptable to buy non-organic
- Quantity- example: if you want to plant 1 acre of pumpkins and the only organic seed available is in 1 oz. packets, then it may be acceptable to buy non-organic

## **DOCUMENTATION AND GOOD FAITH EFFORTS**

Prior approval by PCO for using non-organic seeds/planting stock is not required. Compliance is reviewed in the context of the organic system plan, which is verified during the annual inspection. A pattern of inadequate documentation and lack of good faith effort to obtain organically grown seeds and planting stock may be considered non-compliance and result in PCO requiring prior approval regarding commercial availability issues in future planting cycles.

Documenting your good faith efforts to find suitable organic seeds/planting stock is crucial. We encourage growers to trial organic varieties to determine suitability in their system, if they are hesitant to rely on new varieties. As the demand for organic seed increases, over the years the supply will increase.

## **RESOURCES**

- Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA) has an online directory of organic seed suppliers that can be searched by state and seed category. [www.attra.ncat.org](http://www.attra.ncat.org) or 1-800-346-9140
- The Organic Seed Alliance maintains a list of seed companies that sell certified organic seed. [www.seedalliance.org](http://www.seedalliance.org) or 360-385-7192
- The Organic Trade Association (OTA) website provides contact information for seed companies that sell organic seed. [www.theorganicpages.com](http://www.theorganicpages.com) or 802-275-3819
- The Organic Integrity Database (OID) is an online searchable database of all certified products including seed and transplants. [organic.ams.usda.gov/integrity](http://organic.ams.usda.gov/integrity)
- Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) Organic Seed Finder allows organic seed vendors and potential customers to find one another. [www.organicseedfinder.org](http://www.organicseedfinder.org)
- PickACarrot is an online searchable database with a dedicated Organic Search tool to facilitate finding organic seed for organic producers. [www.pickacarrot.com](http://www.pickacarrot.com)

## ORGANIC SEED SUPPLIERS

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p><b>ALBERT LEA SEED</b><br/>1414 W. Main Street<br/>P.O. Box 127<br/>Albert Lea, MN 56007<br/>800-352-5247<br/>www.alseed.com<br/>seedhouse@alseed.com<br/><i>Organic and untreated sweet corn and organic cover crops.</i></p>                     | <p><b>BLUE RIVER HYBRIDS</b><br/>2326 230<sup>th</sup> Street<br/>Ames, IA 50014<br/>800-370-7979<br/>www.blueriverorgseed.com<br/>goblue@blueriverorgseed.com<br/><i>Organic field corn, alfalfa, soybeans, silage, red clover, sudangrass, sunflowers &amp; grain sorghum.</i></p>   | <p><b>DLF PICKSEED ORGANICS</b><br/>175 W. H Street<br/>P.O. Box 229<br/>Halsey, OR 97348<br/>800-445-2251<br/>www.dlfororganic.org<br/>info@dlfororganic.com<br/><i>Organic forage, cover crop, and lawn seeds available through your local seed distributor or dealer.</i></p>                 | <p><b>ESP SEEDS</b><br/>PO Box 947<br/>Albany, OR 97321-0354<br/>805-291-6172<br/>541-928-5868<br/>www.wildflowerseed.com<br/>cindy@wildflowerseed.com<br/><i>Organic vegetable, herb &amp; flower seeds.</i></p>   |
| <p><b>FEDCO SEEDS</b><br/>PO Box 520<br/>Clinton, ME 04927<br/>207-426-9900<br/>Request a catalog: 207-426-0090<br/>www.fedcoseeds.com<br/>questions@fedcoseeds.com<br/><i>Organic farm seed, pest controls, soil amendments and fertilizers.</i></p> | <p><b>FILAREE GARLIC FARM</b><br/>83 Epley Road<br/>Omak, WA 98841<br/>509-422-6940<br/>www.filareefarm.com<br/>orders@filareefarm.com<br/><i>Extensive collection of organic garlic varieties. Organic shallots, asparagus crowns, seed potatoes, and sweet potato slips.</i></p>   | <p><b>FRED C. GLOECKNER &amp; CO. INC.</b><br/>550 Mamaroneck Avenue, Suite 510<br/>Harrison, NY 10528-1609<br/>800-345-3787<br/>914-698-0848 (fax)<br/>www.fredgloekner.com<br/>info@fredgloekner.com<br/><i>Organic vegetable, herb, &amp; flower seeds.</i></p>                               | <p><b>GREAT HARVEST ORGANICS</b><br/>6767 E. 276th Street<br/>Atlanta, IN 46031<br/>800-937-2325<br/>www.greatharvestorganics.com<br/>amy@greatharvestorganics.com<br/><i>Organic corn, wheat, &amp; soybeans.</i></p>  |
| <p><b>HARRIS SEEDS</b><br/>355 Paul Road<br/>PO Box 24966<br/>Rochester, NY 14624<br/>800-544-7938<br/>www.harriseseeds.com<br/><i>Organic vegetable, herb, and flower seeds. Organic and untreated seeds. OMRI listed growing supplies.</i></p>      | <p><b>HIGH MOWING ORGANIC SEEDS</b><br/>76 Quarry Road<br/>Wolcott, VT 05680<br/>866-735-4454<br/>www.highmowingseeds.com<br/>info@highmowingseeds.com<br/><i>We offer high quality organic seed for over 500 varieties of heirloom, open-pollinated and hybrid vegetables, flowers, herbs, potatoes, garlic, and cover crops.</i></p> | <p><b>HOMESTEAD NUTRITION, INC.</b><br/>245 White Oak Road<br/>New Holland, PA 17557<br/>888-336-7878<br/><a href="http://www.homesteadnutritioninc.com">www.homesteadnutritioninc.com</a><br/>donw@homesteadnutritioninc.com<br/><i>Organic crop seed. Also carries livestock products.</i></p> | <p><b>JOHNNY'S SELECTED SEEDS</b><br/>955 Benton Ave<br/>Winslow, ME 04901<br/>877-JOHNYS (877-564-6697)<br/>www.johnnyseeds.com<br/>service@johnnyseeds.com<br/><i>Organic crop and forage, vegetable, fruit, flower, and herb seeds. Organic garlic bulbs, artichoke tubers, sweet potato slips, potato tubers, and tomato plants, as well as OMRI listed supplies.</i></p> |
| <p><b>KING'S AGRISEEDS INC.</b><br/>1828 Freedom Rd<br/>Suite 101<br/>Lancaster, PA 17601<br/>717-687-6224<br/>www.kingsagriseeds.com<br/>office@kingsagriseeds.com<br/><i>Organic forage, cover crop, and grain seed.</i></p>                        | <p><b>LAKEVIEW ORGANIC GRAIN</b><br/>PO Box 361<br/>Penn Yan, NY 14527<br/>315-531-1038<br/>www.lakevieworganicgrain.com<br/>info@lakevieworganicgrain.com<br/><i>Organic field crop, cover crop &amp; pasture seed.</i></p>   | <p><b>MASTERS CHOICE</b><br/>305 West Vienna Street<br/>Anna, IL 62906<br/>866-444-1044<br/>www.seedcorn.com<br/>info@seedcorn.com<br/><i>Organic seed corn.</i></p>   | <p><b>NETHERLAND BULB CO.</b><br/>13 McFadden Rd<br/>Easton, PA 18045<br/>1-800-788-8547<br/>www.netherlandbulb.com<br/><i>Organic garlic and seed potatoes.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Certified by PCO</b></p>   |
| <p><b>OSBORNE SEED</b><br/>2428 Old Hwy 99 South Road<br/>Mount Vernon, WA 98273<br/>800-845-9113<br/>www.osborneseed.com<br/>info@osborneseed.com<br/><i>Organic vegetable, flower barley seeds</i></p>  | <p><b>PARK SEED CO.</b><br/>3507 Cokesbury Rd<br/>Hodges, SC 29653<br/>1-800-845-3369<br/>www.parkseed.com<br/>info@parkseed.com<br/>1-800-845-3366 Wholesale<br/>www.parkwholesale.com<br/><i>Organic vegetable, herb, flower, and cover crop seeds and supplies.</i></p>   | <p><b>PRAIRIE HYBRIDS</b><br/>27445 Hurd Rd<br/>Deer Grove, IL 61243<br/>800-368-0124<br/>prairiehybrids.com<br/>info@prairiehybrids.com<br/><i>Non-GMO and organic seed corn.</i></p>   | <p><b>ROHRER SEEDS</b><br/>2472 Old Philadelphia Pike<br/>Lancaster, PA 17602<br/>717-299-2571<br/>800-468-4944 (fax)<br/>www.rohrerseeds.com<br/>info@rohrerseeds.com<br/><i>Organic vegetable and herb seeds, fertilizers, and insect control.</i></p>  |

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p><b>SEED CONSULTANTS</b><br/>648 Miami Trace Road SW<br/>PO Box 370<br/>Washington Court House, OH<br/>43160<br/>800-708-2676<br/>www.seedconsultants.com<br/>info@seedconsultants.com<br/><i>Organic hybrid seed corn.</i></p>  | <p><b>SEEDS OF CHANGE</b><br/>PO Box 4908<br/>Rancho Dominguez, CA 90220<br/>888-762-7333<br/>www.seedsofchange.com<br/><i>Organic flowers, herbs and vegetables.</i></p>   | <p><b>SEED SAVERS EXCHANGE</b><br/>3094 North Winn Road<br/>Decorah, IA 52101<br/>563-382-5990<br/>www.seedsaVERS.org<br/><i>Organic vegetables, flowers, garlic, herbs, sorghum, and heirloom varieties.</i></p>   | <p><b>SEEDWAY, LLC</b><br/>PO Box 250<br/>1734 Railroad Place<br/>Hall, NY 14463<br/>800-836-3710<br/>www.seedway.com<br/><i>Some organic and untreated vegetable &amp; herb seeds.</i><br/><br/><b>Certified by PCO</b></p>   |
| <p><b>SNOW SEED &amp; SUPPLIES INC.</b><br/>1147 Madison Lane<br/>Salinas, CA 93907<br/>831-758-9869<br/>dev.snowseedcompany.com<br/>info@snowseedco.com<br/><i>Full line of organic vegetables, as well as herbs and flowers.</i></p>   | <p><b>SOUTHERN EXPOSURE SEED EXCHANGE</b><br/>PO Box 460<br/>Mineral, VA 23117<br/>540-894-9480<br/>Fax orders: 540-266-1021<br/>www.southernexposure.com<br/>gardens@southernexposure.com<br/><i>800+ varieties of certified organic heirloom &amp; open pollinated vegetable, herb and flower seeds, as well as garlic, perennial onion bulbs, seed potatoes, and sweet potato slips.</i></p> | <p><b>TERRITORIAL SEED COMPANY</b><br/>PO Box 158<br/>Cottage Grove, OR 97424<br/>800-626-0866<br/>www.territorialseed.com<br/>info@territorialseed.com<br/><i>Territorial offers all Abundant Life Seeds favorite varieties. 100% organic. All open pollinated. Vegetable &amp; herb seed, garlic &amp; potatoes. OMRI Listed Soil amendments.</i></p> | <p><b>THE MAINE POTATO LADY</b><br/>PO Box 65<br/>Guilford, ME 04443<br/>207-717-5451<br/>www.mainepotatolady.com<br/>customer-service@mainepotatolady.com<br/><i>Organic seed potatoes, shallots, onion sets, garlic, cover crops, plus fertilizer, soil &amp; seed inoculant, sweet potatoes, &amp; onion transplants.</i></p> |
| <p><b>VITALIS ORGANIC SEEDS</b><br/>7 Harris Place<br/>Salinas, CA 93901<br/>831-751-0937<br/>usa.vitalisorganic.com<br/>info@vitalisorganic.com<br/><i>Organic vegetable and herb seeds, with emphasis on lettuce, spinach, tomato, pepper, cucumber, squash, and melons.</i></p> | <p><b>W. ATLEE BURPEE &amp; CO.</b><br/>300 Park Avenue<br/>Warminster, PA 18974<br/>800-888-1447<br/>www.burpee.com/organic-gardening/<br/><i>Organic vegetable, herb, flower, and cover crop seeds. Organic gardening supplies.</i></p>   | <p><b>WELTER SEED &amp; HONEY CO.</b><br/>17724 Hwy. 136<br/>Onslow, IA 52321<br/>800-728-8450 or 800-470-3325<br/>www.welterseed.com<br/><a href="http://info@welterseed.com">info@welterseed.com</a><br/><i>Organic corn, grain, forage and cover crops.</i></p>  | <p><b>WOOD PRAIRIE FAMILY FARM</b><br/>49 Kinney Road<br/>Bridgewater, ME 04735<br/>207-429-9765<br/>www.woodprairie.com<br/>orders@woodprairie.com<br/><i>Organic vegetable and herb seeds, seed potatoes, and farm and cover crop seed. Approved fertilizers.</i></p>  |

**ORGANIC TRANSPLANT SUPPLIERS**

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>MOUNTAIN VALLEY GROWERS</b><br/>38325 Pepperweed Road<br/>Squaw Valley, CA 93675<br/>599-338-2775<br/>559-338-0075 (fax)<br/>mountainvalleygrowers.com<br/>customerservice@mountainvalleygrowers.com<br/><i>Organic veggies, perennial &amp; herb plants, including strawberries.</i></p> | <p><b>MOUNTAINSIDE ORGANICS</b><br/>7815 State Rd 44 Hwy<br/>Williamsport, PA 17702<br/>570-745-3660<br/><i>Organic pepper transplants.</i></p> | <p><b>PATCHWORK FARM</b><br/>476 Jackson Hill Rd.<br/>Aaronsburg, PA 16820<br/>814-349-8275<br/>casefarm@hotmail.com<br/><i>Organic vegetable seeds and transplants.</i><br/><br/><b>Certified by PCO</b></p> | <p><b>PEACE TREE FARM</b><br/>295 Park Dr W.<br/>Kintnersville, PA 18930<br/>610-847-8152<br/>610-847-5287 (fax)<br/>www.peacetreefarm.com<br/>info@peacetreefarm.com<br/><i>Custom organic herbs, vegetables, and fruit bearing plant transplants for commercial operations.</i></p> |
|---|---|---|---|