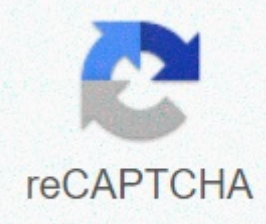




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## Accelerated shelf life study

I have a new rule that I'm making for myself and holding others to: If you haven't worked on something in the past two weeks, you're not allowed to talk about it. I'm guilty. But not as much, anymore. My ideas would just sit for months. Stagnating. Ideas rot, and the only way to keep them from spoiling is to turn them into reality. And I'm not the only one guilty of wasting ideas. I've heard about the same projects that y'all were going to start working on "this weekend" for the past 6 months. Stuck on repeat.When all you do is talk, you forget the most critical step—making. I'm not saying skip researching your ideas, but less-is-more. You don't need to be an expert to solve a problem and it doesn't need to be perfect the first time. Cut before you measure.How to bring an idea to life todayBlock off a chunk of time. 6 is good, 12 is better.This is seriously the hardest part, even though it seems like the easiest. It's hard to find 6-12 hours of continuous, distraction free time. I love Sunday for this.No one sees me on Sundays because I cut myself off from the world and spend the entire day creating. I get extreme. No distractions. Not even cooking. I only eat light food, all of it's pre-cooked or raw. No friends, no phone, no Twitter.Outline. You have 2 minutes. Go.I learned this technique while writing a book, but it works for everything. Get a pen and paper. Break your project into steps. Even if it sounds stupid, even if the step is "go to the store and buy a pencil," write out as many actionable steps as you can in 2 minutes. After 2 minutes, stop. You now have your plan.The time limit is key. It's a race to get as much on paper as you can, but it's fluid and doesn't need to be perfect.This is a NO GOOGLING zoneWhen you're creating, Google is off limits, unless you're looking up how to do something very specific that you're working on right now. Like, "syntax for creating Rails associations" is fine but "best practices for building a Rails application" is not. If you can't hold yourself to this, block Google.I like to write down anything that distracts me—Google searches, random thoughts, new ideas, whatever. The point is, if you write them down, they'll stop bubbling up when you're in the zone.The easy part, creatingWhen you set yourself up for success, creating, doing something actionable, is the easiest part. I know that when I follow this process, I get into that mind-numbing state where I just flow. It's like all of my energy and focus just pour into whatever I'm working on (it's how I feel right now, writing this post).Update that blog you've been ignoring for the past 6 months.Start coding that side project—you can build a MVP in 36 hours.Outline that book you've wanted to write for years—it only takes 15 minutes.No one will notice if you don't, but someone might notice if you do.Ideas Have a 2 Week Shelf Life | Steve CoronaSteve Corona is the CTO of Twitpic and author of Scaling PHP. Follow him on Twitter @stevencorona.Want to see your work on Lifehacker? Email Tessa. Cravings for snappy fresh beans, luscious tomatoes and brightly colored flowers hit hard as the days lengthen and winter starts to lose its grip. Perhaps it leaves you rifling through leftover seeds, wondering whether they're still good. Seeds expire, but expiration dates are rough guidelines; experts say it depends on the kind of seeds and how they were stored.For advice we turned to two people: Randel Agrella, a senior horticulturalist at Missouri-based Baker Seeds, which sells more than 1,200 varieties; and Phil Kauth, director of preservation at Iowa-based Seed Savers Exchange, which sells about 600 varieties to the public. Seed Savers also has a gardener-to-gardener seed exchange with up to 5,000 rarer varieties.Can I Plant Last Year's Seeds?Maybe. Most vegetable seeds will last through their expiration date if kept cool, dry and away from sunlight. Baker Seed guarantees seeds for at least two years after purchase. Most seeds last three to five years after purchase, but those dates can vary depending on the variety.Lettuce, peppers, parsnips and onions have a short lifespan and should be planted within a year or two. Corn and beans are among the best for long-term storage. "I've had them last for 10 years," Agrella said.How Do I Test Seed Viability?To test whether seeds will germinate, grab a paper coffee filter or a wet paper towel. Squeeze it thoroughly so it's damp but not soggy. Place five test seeds on the paper towel and slide it into a plastic storage bag or sealed container to keep it from drying out.Viable seeds should germinate in roughly six to 10 days, but you should check the time frame listed on each seed packet. You can also find rough guidelines through The Old Farmer's Almanac.Cold-tolerant plants such as peas, greens and cabbage family crops can germinate in lower temperatures, such as 55 to 65 degrees F. But tomato, cucumber, squash and other heat-loving crops need temperatures closer to 70 F to germinate. Try to replicate those temperatures indoors for the seed germination test.Seeds needing a little more warmth can be set near a lamp or in the kitchen. You can find heating mats that can go beneath seed-starting trays when you have viable seeds ready to plant.A quick alternative test if you're eager to start a tray of seedlings is to drop a few seeds into a glass of water. If they sink, they're good. If they float, toss them. If you have a mix of failed and germinating seeds, you can give them a try, but plant extras to make up for diminished returns.How Do I Keep Seeds Longer?Most seeds will last a couple of seasons if kept somewhere cool, dry and away from sunlight. "For longer-term storage, I steer [gardeners] to freezer storage," Agrella says.A freezer, especially a less frequently opened chest freezer, stays dryer than a refrigerator with fresh produce. Kauth advised using a glass jar with a tight screw top or lid with a rubber gasket. Plastic freezer bags can let in condensation that compromises seeds.What About Grass Seed?Like other seeds, how long grass seed stays viable depends on the variety of seed and how well it's stored, Kauth says. It may stay viable for three to five years if kept cool, dry and safe from rodents or insects that spoil it. Try a sturdy, tightly sealed storage container or bin.How About Flower Seeds?Treat flower seeds the same way as vegetable seeds. Keep them in a freezer for long-term storage and test older seeds using the damp paper towel method.Be sure to keep them in their original packets so you know the temperature and amount of time needed to germinate, along with any specific instructions. Some with hard outer shells, such as nasturtiums, morning glory and moonflower seeds, may require a 24-hour pre-soaking.Look for Seed SwapsIf you want to try several varieties of vegetables or flowers in a small garden without a lot of leftover seeds, consider sharing seed packets or trading with neighbors or friends. Fellow gardeners in local garden clubs can be another good source for seeds, especially for unusual or heirloom varieties or any seeds in high demand or back-ordered.

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