

It is time for another update on the “bean project” that any reader of these little pieces has long since forgotten. So, for the brief, bare-bones of the story—In 2022 we planted light red kidney bean seeds we had purchased from our usual seed company, Fedco. In the fall of that year, when we began shelling the dry beans for winter storage and use, among the several pounds of beans was a handful of shiny black beans with white flecks. I had planted every seed of the kidney beans by hand and was completely certain that each seed had been a light red kidney bean.

So, we saved those pretty black and white seeds and planted them in their own garden bed in the spring of 2023. That fall, when we harvested the dry beans, we shelled them and found a “calico” bean crop—beans of several different colors, white, red kidney color, all black, black flecked with pink, dark brown, light brown, and brown and white colored like pinto beans, plus some that were black with white flecks like we had sown.

This past spring, we planted a bed of each of these colors. Now, some of the beds have ripened, and it is interesting and even a bit thrilling to sit during the evenings and shell beans to see what kind of treasures we will find this year.

So far, we have picked and shelled three beds—the “mother” regular light red kidney beans, black with white flecks, and black with pink flecks.

It will take some time to lay the beans out and evaluate the colors, but there are general trends showing up. The black with pink flecks have come back this year with beans like what was planted plus some red kidney type, a few black beans, and some browns with pink flecks. The bed that was planted to black with white fleck beans resulted in a wide range of color combinations of black, brown, and red, plus some white beans. The plain red kidney beans—just like the original seed purchase—produced all regular light red kidney beans, not an outlier in the bunch.

We have several beds to pick and shell, so it will be exciting to see what we get from them. And yes, that IS what passes for excitement here on Coe Creek. A fine way to end the gardening season.