

Sowing the SEEDs of Change



by Rosie Rose

The SEED project germinated a year ago in Orgiva, when three passionate gardeners got together to share their frustrations about the ongoing threat of the proposed EU seed law and the growth of Genetically Modified seeds. While talking about what they could do to help preserve locally grown varieties that are in danger of being lost, the seed bank was born!

After just one year the project has grown into a global community initiative with SEED proudly supporting 41 seed guardians mostly in Spain, but also from countries including Argentina and Morocco. As these dedicated guardians grow seeds for the bank, a team of enthusiastic non gardening helpers support other aspects of the project.

Our guardians grow varieties from the bank and return more seeds to the bank than they were originally given. The guardians follow guidelines to ensure the seeds are of good quality, and when returning seeds to the bank, the growers fill out a seed return form which supplies the information needed to build a profile of each variety. The seeds are then catalogued and banked and the guardians get access to more seeds and the seed stocks swell. Everybody wins!



SEED'S mission is to encourage as many people as possible to save seeds and to preserve as many varieties as we can, especially the rare and hard to find. We hope to educate people about seed saving, with a long term aim of providing school and community gardens with wonderful historic seeds we maintain. SEED is giving a talk to permaculture students taking courses at a local permaculture centre next month.

SEED's weekly "Seedly Wednesday" event, is the place for anyone to come along to help or to find out about the project. Helpers clean and pack seeds, stock take, work on the website and help with plant



isolation in the SEED garden to prevent cross pollination. With so many diverse aspects to the project, it's important that SEED remains a team effort.



SEED is a non profit initiative relying on donations, in exchange for seeds, to cover running costs. Once the set up costs have been recouped, any extra funds will be invested in new rare and unusual varieties and resources for running courses. SEED has received many generous donations of seeds from around the world.

The new SEED website (www.seeed.es) is packed full of seed saving information, guides and techniques, lovely pictures of vegetables, video tutorials and a news and events column. There is also a blog and a forum where budding seed savers can ask questions and get involved.

There are currently over 200 varieties of heirloom edibles and companion plants in the bank, including a large selection of

tomatoes. Last year, a founder member grew 208 varieties on her smallholding ranging from rare as hens teeth "Black Pepper" to a currant tomato, the size of a pea! Tomatoes are so diverse and come in many different shapes, sizes, colours and flavours and with names like "Missouri Love Apple" and "Pineapple Pig" it's easy to become addicted to growing them!



SEED are very excited about the 227 varieties of chillies we have to grow this year. Chillies thrive in a Mediterranean climate so no shortage of chilli sauce over the winter! In the bank are a range of chillies from "Trinidad Perfume" with no heat through to a large selection of 'super hots' including the "Carolina Reaper", scoring 2 million Scoville Units.



Seed saving doesn't stop in the winter. Happily growing through the colder months are varieties like "Shiraz" Mangetout, "Pink Flamingo" Chard, "Yukina" Savoy, "Huauzontle" Aztec Broccoli, "Albino" Beetroot

and at least 20 types of lettuce!

Saving seeds is one step on from growing. To save pure varieties it is essential to understand cross pollination so SEED organises free seed saving workshops. The last one was attended by 40 keen, experienced gardeners, all potential seed savers. In late summer SEED held an heirloom vegetable day where growers showed off a vibrant display of their produce and held a tomato tasting to find the year's tastiest tomato.



On a heavier note. Seed saving is now more important than ever with the threat of the proposed EU law on "Regenerative Plant Materials". That's seeds and cuttings to you and me. If the law goes through, the choice of vegetable and flower varieties available to gardeners will be a drastically reduced. Smaller seed companies will struggle to survive while giant agri business thrives. The European parliament voted against the proposal under pressure of international campaigns but there is a similar proposal due again in 2015.



If you feel strongly about preserving heirloom seeds lobby your MEPs and ask them to support a rethink on the proposal. Buy from ethical small seed companies, support projects like SEED and most importantly, save your own seeds!

If you would like to get involved please contact info@seeed.es. Donations of seeds, time, equipment and money all gratefully received!