



Recognizing City Employees: Librarians at Otay Ranch Branch

When the library branch at the Otay Ranch Town Center reopened in April, librarians Natalie Vega, Diana Ysla, Mikaela Espiritu, and Ahmad Jaber began planting the seeds for a new program that will be available at all Chula Vista library branches this month—a seed library. Beginning May 6, anyone with a library card can peruse the portable seed shelves and select a variety of fruit and vegetable seeds to take home and plant. There are dozens of varieties from which to choose. Who knew there were at least 19 varieties of tomatoes?



The idea for a seed library germinated when the librarians won a Sustainable Libraries Grant from the California State Library system. There was one of 15 grants of this kind awarded this year, and they have used the funds to purchase hundreds of starter seeds from [San Diego Seed Company](#). The seeds are all organic and native to this area, helping to expand sustainable agriculture. Vega, Ysla, Espiritu and Jaber have spent weeks parceling out the seeds into individual packets. The labeled packets are then placed into individual cabinet shelves—picture the old-time library card catalog.

The seed library will be replenished when patrons who took seeds this year come back next year with the seeds from their successful gardens. The librarians have already held workshops on how to harvest the seeds at each of the library branches last month. There are many more workshops planned for the remainder of the year.

To build success for new and veteran gardeners, the librarians have curated books and resources that will help your seedlings thrive. Each seed variety also has a QR code that allows gardeners to learn more about how to grow that type of plant.

The librarians say the seed library is another way to connect with our community. They look forward to learning more about gardening alongside the patrons.

“We encourage people to come, even if it’s their first time, like us,” Espiritu said. “The library is not just books. It is a way to show our community new things.”

The librarians have already begun practicing their gardening skills. As part of their longtime partnership with Chula Vista Animal Services, the librarians have helped plant food for the Bunny Garden at the Animal Care Facility.

To learn more, head over to the [Library Services website](#).