

# 8th Annual Seed Library Summit

National Heirloom Expo

Santa Rosa, CA

Sept. 12, 2018

Attendance: Lanneth Allen (Gilroy, CA), Paul Anguiano (formerly Mid Columbia Seeds, Richland, WA), Azita Banu (CityScapeSeeds.com & SLOLA, LA, CA), Lori Bennett (Seeds for sharing and library, Milwaukie, OR), Margie Bushman (Santa Barbara Permaculture Network, Santa Barbara, CA), Sondra Bierre (SeedShare, Pleasanton and Livermore, CA), Joan Borgman (SFV & SLOLA, LA, CA), Gabriella Cobb (Victory Gardens for Peace, Mendocino, CA), Susannah Connor (Pima County Public Library Seed Library, Tucson, AZ), Debra Doyle (Windsor, CA), Brooke Eichenluab (Victory Gardens for Peace, Mendocino, CA), Katrina Eriksson (SLOLA, LA, CA) Kimberly Fister (Victory Gardens for Peace, Mendocino, CA), Bettina Gatti, Ken Greene (Seed Shed, NY), Gregor (LA, CA but not with SLOLA) Carolyn Harrison (Healdsburg Seed Library, Healdsburg, CA), Carol Henderson (Community Seed Exchange, Sebastopol, CA), Yvette Henson (Southwestern Colorado Seed Library, San Miguel Basin, CO), Daniel Golly (Boulder, CO), Justine Hernandez (Pima County Public Library Seed Library, Tucson, AZ), Kaila Hirsch (Boulder, CO), Julia Larke (Point Arena Seed Library, Mendocino Co., CA), Juaquin Lawrence (formerly of Seeds of Change, CO), Joel Lippert (Truckee Meadows Seed Alliance, Reno, NV), Jen Lyon (Yokayo Seed Project, Ukiah, CA), Sue Middagh (Gilroy, CA), Jose Quintero (SLOLA, LA, CA) Joanne Poyourow (author *Urban Seed Saving*) Apple Resonance (SLOLA, LA, CA), Destiny Rivera (Ocean Beach Seed Library, San Diego, CA), Peter Ruddock (Slow Food CA), Christopher Shein (BASIL, Berkeley and author of *A Vegetable Gardener's Guide to Permaculture*), Iris Steffensen (Victory Gardens for Peace, Mendocino, CA), Pat Sobrero (The Seed Library at the Round Valley Public Library, Covelo, CA), Tonka (IEE), two folks from Phoenix, AZ

## Minutes:

Report outs from different seed libraries and projects

- **Slow Food CA:** Peter Ruddock from Slow Food CA has been working with Hillie Salol of Silicon Valley Grows and the creator of the One Seed, One Community Project to bring the One Seed, One Community Project to the 24 Slow Food CA Chapters they are proposing to partner with seed libraries. There was interest from the CA seed libraries to involve seed libraries in the statewide proposal. Picking a bean variety that works will be worked on soon. There may need to be two varieties based on the climate differences between coastal and inland.
- **Portland Seed Library**
- **Yokayo Seed Library at the Ukiah Library:** They have a mobile book and seed library.
- **Community Seed Exchange:** They have a quarter acre garden on the same property as their seed library at a local church. They have weekly garden work parties and the 4th

Saturday they have a work party and class. They are 100% locally grown seed with about 60% from the seed garden.

- **Boulder:** Interested in starting a seed library
- **Seed Shed:** Ken Greene of the Hudson Valley Seed Co. (formerly Hudson Valley Seed Library) has co-founded [SeedShed.org](http://SeedShed.org) to support seed initiatives and in particular are interested in working with local tribes. They have a floating seed library on a boat.
- **Juaquin Lawrence**, a pioneer from Seeds of Change, a seed company dedicated to conservation that started back in the late 1980s, is now working with [Abbondanza Seed](#), a regional seed company in Boulder; working with over 300 seed varieties
- **Southwestern Colorado Seed Library (San Miguel Basin):** They recently opened.
- **Ocean Beach Seed Library** (Ocean Beach, San Diego, CA): Meeting with the Friends of the Library this weekend to request funding and support for seed library. They are in the process of opening and looking to partner with a local coop; they have a vibrant beach community; hoping to replicate seed library throughout San Diego County public libraries
- **The Seed Library at the Round Valley Public Library (Covelo, CA):** Did a One Seed, One Community project with the Covelo Res. Bean, an endangered bean that has local importance
- **Victory Gardens for Peace (Mendocino Co., CA):** Becoming a nonprofit; expanding ability to grow seeds; have 450 varieties that they offer seeds to community for free
- **Santa Barbara Permaculture Guild (Santa Barbara, CA):** 10th annual seed swap; hoping to open a seed library through a public library this year; there is a community garden at a church that they work with that grows food for food bank and that they are now growing seed too
- **Add Lauren to attendance (Nicole – Knoxville)**
  - **Urban Seed Saving:** Joanne Poyourow created an e-book of seed saving and solutions for urban settings; will make a free copy available if you are a seed library. It can be purchased on [Amazon](#) or at Change-Making.com.
  - **SeedShare (Livermore & Pleasanton, CA):** 4<sup>th</sup> year at Pleasanton location and 2<sup>nd</sup> year at Livermore; distributing lots of seeds; Sunday offering first community project on fall seeds
  - **Healdsburg Seed Library (Healdsburg, CA):** There was one old wooden card catalog cabinet left, which they got! Most seeds are donated from seed companies. Goal is getting a growing program going.
  - **Point Arena Seed Library (??, CA):** Tried to do local seeds; got a big donation from Ecology Action, a local seed company that recently went out of business; hopefully they will get returns.
  - **Pima County Public Library's Seed Library (Tucson, CA):** In the middle of their third One Seed, One Community Project. First year: Distributed 700 packets, choice a regionally significant bean, but not many returns. Second year: Better return rate, but they didn't get around to packing seeds soon and when they got to it, they were all invested. Pooling beans has down sides. They now have a freezer to kill bugs.
  - **Truckee Meadows Seed Alliance (Reno, NV):** Had a successful seed swap and a not so successful seedling swap. Hosting a community showing of *Seed, The Untold Story*
  - **Knoxville, TN:** Starting a Seed Library
  - **Phoenix, AZ:** Two folks from Phoenix interested in sharing seeds and seed libraries

- **BASIL (Berkeley, CA):** First seed library to open; in March 2019, they'll be celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! Christopher Shein, one of the creators of BASIL, is excited to share about this year's summit with Sascha DuBrul, who helped start BASIL, and Terri Compost, who helped start it and kept it running for well over a decade. Christopher is the author of [\*The Vegetable Gardener's Guide to Permaculture\*](#), which includes a section on seed libraries.
- **Mid Columbia Seeds (Richland, WA):** Had a seed library before and planning on starting another one
- **Richmond Grows Seed Lending Library (Richmond, CA):** Working with 12 seed libraries in the East Bay Area of the San Francisco Bay Area on the One Seed, One Community Project. They used the emails that Hillie Salol from Silicon Valley Grows created to walk people through the from planting to seed sharing. About 400 packets were given out and 135 people signed up to receive the emails. They are doing their Great Bean Weigh Off at a local urban ag's harvest day festival. All of these resources are on [SeedLibraries.net](#).
- **Wood River Seed Library (Ketchum, ID)**  
Sent an email to share news about the partnership they recently formed between the WRSR and the local Upper Big Wood River Grange Association. This very informal "partnership" was formed in order to create a "community seed vault" where 10% of the seeds of each variety we save locally are now being safely stored (ie: cool, dark, dry and locked in a storage closet in the basement of the Grange Hall) where these local gems will be keep extra-secure in case of some accidental loss or damage to the 90% of our seed supply that is being stored and distributed at the Community Library. Every year from this point forward we will add another 10% of the local saved seeds that year to this community seed vault. We store the seeds in their labelled packets which are grouped together in mason jars as either a Veggie, Herb or Flower and the jars padded and enclosed in a storage container to further preserve and protect them from insects and rodents.

Creating scores of community seed vaults seems to be another perfect solution / starting point for increasing seed saving awareness and local seed security. The creation of our community vault ended up as a story in the local paper and inspired several more local gardeners to join our group of seed savers! Rocky Mountain Seed Alliance is still working to build a regional seed vault (and will someday!) and in the meanwhile it seems to be an excellent idea for every seed library to make the effort to create their own, simple, secure, low maintenance community seed storage, backup facility.

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## World Cafe Breakout Sessions

After our initial introductions in the audio-challenged outdoor patio space, we broke into smaller sessions and moved to different locations so that we could have more in-depth conversations.

- [Session 1: Start a Seed Library](#)
- [Session 2: One Seed, One Community](#)
- [Session 3: Maintaining a Seed Library & Increasing Quality and Returns](#)

# Session 1: Start a Seed Library

From Sara McCamant

We started with defining what a Seed Library is for people new to the concept- a community project that creates free access to seeds for community members- can be located in a Public Library or a community space. Some focus on seed access with the intent of creating more food sovereignty and others are focused on teaching seed saving and having locally grown seed- with a whole bunch of versions of all of this.

## How do you assure quality?

Need to be very clear that there are no guarantees and that you have signage that says so. Ways to help with creating more quality include explicit labels or sign in sheets for seed that asks about how it was grown, a labeling system that shows if the seed is from an experienced seed saver, teaching seed saving so you improve seed quality. Mark seed easy or hard to save.

## What are check out procedures?

Varies with each library- from signing out on a sheet of paper to Pima's including it in their database and library check out system. Some use a computer to track it, others don't track at all.

## What are the costs of starting a seed library?

We could not give this person an amount as there was no one there from an established seed library in a book library.

## Legal Entity?

Encouraged to start under the wing of another non profit as a fiscal sponsor. There was a long conversation about what it takes to set up a 501C3. and that you might need some kind of insurance.

## What about membership?

As long there is not a financial requirement to membership, you can have members but you need to be careful about any financial exchange that might look like a monetary exchange for seed. Get clear what you membership for, is it just a mailing list or do you want official membership and what level of engagement is asked for to be a member.

Then we talked about other resources to look at to start:

[seedlibraries.net](http://seedlibraries.net), [seedshed.org](http://seedshed.org) and [Seedsavers.org](http://Seedsavers.org)

### **From Lori Bennett**

Two main topics that intertwined were how to become a legal entity & which brought up how to raise initial funding, especially for incorporation fees (projected around \$500.00). Also: "What were normal operating costs? Re: printing flyers, seed & seed envelopes....

Suggestions included asking another non-profit to form under their umbrella. At 1 point I explained how SLOLA utilized this strategy itself at our 2nd new 'branch' which used the existing legal structure at their new meeting spot. One concern was if folks would be covered 'off site' on a field trip. Seed swaps were encouraged for individual folks interested to start a library with a goal of 5 core members/a core legal board of 3 plus dedicated assistance.

Quite a lot of credit was given to normal book librarians for their dedication to dealing daily with such a diversity of people of all ages. This was as encouragement towards utilizing existing public libraries as a physical starting point. One member noted that the librarian in their small town refused to cooperate, leaving an ongoing struggle for legal attainment.

Questions on "the purity of returning seed" from beginning to advanced seed stewards was discussed to include composting questionable returns on varieties such as squash. Types of questionnaires to ascertain the level of member ability to keep seed genetics pure.

## **Session 2: One Seed, One Community**

Respectfully submitted by Carol Henderson

As we started our session, the **Ken Greene from Hudson Valley Seed Company** (formerly **Hudson Valley Seed Library**) and [SeedShed.org](http://SeedShed.org) spoke to our group.

- They did a project similar project to One Seed, One Community project that was initiated in 2005 in the Hudson Valley.
- It was successful because of the educational component about the variety being planted and because everyone was given the same information and kept motivated through regular emails.
- He brought up the very relevant point of inclusion in the world of seed libraries, and reminded us to ask ourselves the question of who is not showing up. How do we increase community involvement?
- There is "genetic diversity because of cultural diversity."
- What seed are we choosing to grow out and how does it connect to the community?

**Definition of One Seed/One Community project.**

- As a community, one variety is chosen that has a connection to the community and the food we eat. The idea develops the full cycle of the plant life from seed planting to seed harvesting. This notion is then developed as to how and why we share the seed.

## Share outs

### Susannah Connor from Pima County, Arizona

- They have been running their program for three years and give information about the seeds as well as recipes that use the food.
- As librarians, they are interested in programming a variety of activities to tie the seed-growing into the community with master gardeners, local writers and artists offering a variety of classes and workshops.
- The seeds are in the card catalog system of the library and are available at 28 branches by request.
- Questions came up about the population size of the plants being grown and also about the idea of asking certain folks, perhaps Native Americans or others if it is okay to grow a seed that "belongs" to a certain community.



### Peter Ruddock from Silicon Valley and California Slow Food movement

- He works with Hillie Salo in partnership with Slow Food California.
- This year they are growing **Yellow Indian Woman Beans** with mixed results in different microclimates (hotter areas had less production; coastal areas seemed more successful).

- They send out monthly notices of information of what should be happening with the plants.
- The seeds were free and people could just sign up.
- Beans are a more successful crop than saving seed from lettuce.
- They are planning an event for October 13 (close to World Food Day) to celebrate the collection of the bean seeds and to enjoy activities including comparing notes of what grew, a potluck, and seed weighing.
- The idea of the seed libraries being able to keep 10% of the seed (a tithe) was an idea.
- Activities and events “need to be easy” for folks.

**Pat Sobrero from The Seed Library at the Round Valley Public Library  
Covelo, CA**

- They are growing the **Covelo Reservation Bean**, which is a rare bean.
- She is trying to help increase the stock of the bean.
- They have created a two-page history of the bean.
- She will be happy if she is able to get back a jar of bean seeds back.
- Having a Facebook group would be helpful so that people can share photos and stay motivated.

**Rebecca Newburn from Richmond Grows Seed Lending Library,  
Richmond, CA**

- This year they are growing the **Painted Pony Dry Bean**, which can be used as a dry bean or as a green bean.
- Rebecca has collaborated with Hillie and have provided email templates that can be tweaked to each community (available through [seedlibraries.net](http://seedlibraries.net))
- The successful plants are ones that are easy to grow, self-pollinating, are pretty, and have a story or cultural relevance.
- Green beans or soup beans are good because they are dual purpose.
- The idea is for people to save seeds, understand the whole cycle and be a part of the community.
- There were 3 levels of commitment from folks:

Care to Share: 20 seeds

Grow a Row: 40 seeds

Bed of Beans: 100 seeds

- Labels and all of the resources for the One Seed, One Community project, such as emails, sign up sheets, and tracking sheets are available on

[seedlibraries.net](http://seedlibraries.net)

- The information was translated into Spanish.
- Sign up sheets for the commitment level seems to make people feel more accountable.



- East Bay Local Seeds want to do their Great Bean Weigh off at a harvest festival that is run through a local urban ag group at their demonstration farm.
- One Seed, One Community Project was done through the East Bay Local Seeds, a partnerships with UC Extension, 12 seed libraries, master gardeners, seed activists, and urban ag folks.
- It's good to have some seed saving classes set up so that if folks sign up and want an in person seed saving training, they can easily plug into that in addition to receiving the email support. Classes could be taught by Master Gardeners.
- The next step is to develop the idea of keeping the cycle year round by planting peas in the fall at the time the bean seeds are being collected. A winter pea could also be dual purpose and could tap into the school garden cycles.
- As people return the beans (summer), it's good to have the peas (fall/spring) selection packed and ready to hand out.
- Information came up that the UC Cooperative Extension runs programs in the following: Master Food Preserver, Master Composters, Master Beekeepers and Master Gardeners.

### **Final Thoughts**

As our group session came to a close, Rebecca helped us ponder some of the possibilities of seed breeding projects with questions such as the following:

- How do we manage for pests and climate change?
- Is keeping some of our seeds separate a good idea?
- How do we "backup" our collections of saved seeds?
- How do we breed for resilience?
- What dry farming techniques should we be exploring?
- Do we need to be breeding for separate microclimates?

### **Additional notes from the One Seed, One Community Session from Laura, Pt. Arena, CA**

The biggest challenge of having a successful one seed one community event is in the education. Before seeds are distributed, education on what outcomes are desired and how to achieve those outcomes is essential. A lot of groundwork must be done before the public is involved. Info sheets and even a class with a master gardener or other qualified person to prepare folks and 'sell' the seed so they want to grow it and know how to grow it so that the seed comes true. The most important, in my view, is the choice of an appropriate seed. Most have used a bean. A bean that is representative and 'pretty', culturally relevant and preferably with some kind of backstory can stir enthusiasm and add to the people's feeling a part of a worthy project. Ken Greene from Hudson Valley Seeds and [seedshed.org](http://seedshed.org) spoke to the group stressing inclusion – who is not showing up at the seed bank? – to address the issues of seed and food justice. He said genetic diversity=cultural diversity. Some have partnered with a Master Gardener program and with larger farmers to get greater quantities of seed returned. Susanna and Justine of Pima County AZ public library reported on the 3 years they did it. They used a pea, a cowpea and a

garbanzo bean with varying success. One year they had a lot of return but the seed was not stored properly for a few months and became infested with a pest.

Yellow Indian Woman was this year's selection for Silicon Valley Grows and Richmond Grows used a different bean.

Pat from Covelo reported that they are now in the midst of a one seed project with the Covelo Rez Bean and are hoping for a good return.

Sample seed packets, info and signup sheet were passed around. Also suggested was to have an event at harvest time – a weigh off and potluck— some have it around World Food Day which is October 15.

## **Session 3: Maintaining a Collection & Increasing Quality & Returns**

Sorry, but this report was never submitted.