

## WHY SAVE SEED?

About 100 years ago our food crops were represented by more than 1,500 plant types. Today that number has dwindled to around 30 with wheat, rice, corn, and soybeans providing the bulk of our food crops. Our rich food heritage has been all but forgotten in industrial agriculture's race for productivity.

The garden seed industry focuses on producing new "hybrid" varieties that garner high profits, rather than the older varieties that are less lucrative. (Hybrids are the result of an artificial cross of two very different parent plants.) Many commercial hybrid seeds are bred for uniformity and shelf life, not taste.

Putting all the eggs in one basket like this is a bad idea. Remember the Irish Potato Famine? What took humans 10,000 years to create could be lost in a single generation. Diversity is what makes our food systems resilient when it comes to threats like insects, disease, and extremes in weather.

You can be part of the worldwide effort to conserve seed varieties before they are lost forever by letting a few garden plants go to seed each year and sharing the seed with other gardeners.

### Benefits of Saving Seeds



By saving seed year after year in Bethlehem, plants will eventually become adapted to our local environment. Saving seed from the strongest plants each year will ensure the best possible plants for our area. This won't happen if you buy seed produced in another climate.

Sharing seed with other gardeners safeguards the against crop failure and loss. The idea is to spread these fragile "eggs" into many baskets so that they are still around for future seasons and future generations.

# Bethlehem seedlibrary and Seed Exchange

The Bethlehem Library has added a community-owned seed library to its collection. Envisioned and organized by a collaboration of people from the Bethlehem Conservation Commission, Bethlehem Library, and the Celebrate Bethlehem Transition Group, the Seed Library & Seed Exchange is a self-perpetuating collection of seeds that is available to the public free of charge.

### Learn to Grow

New to gardening or seed saving? Start with something easy (see list inside). The Library has an extensive collection of books on gardening and seed saving, and workshops will be held at the library or the Community Garden in the spring and fall.



### Happy Gardening!

The library can also connect you with an active network of experienced gardeners ready to help you. Ask at the library desk for more information, or google these websites: "Bethlehem CT Library" or "Bethlehem CT Community Garden". You can also call the Community Garden leaders for gardening and seed saving advice:

Cynthia Rabinowitz (203) 266-5595  
Sandra Ruzika (203) 405-1767  
Nancy Stein (203) 266-7084