



# Reference Notes

Montgomery City-County Public Library

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## Where Have All the Fruits and Vegetables Gone? Seed Saving Goes Global

In 1903, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) listed 408 varieties of tomatoes, 307 varieties of sweet corn, and 544 varieties of cabbage sold by commercial seed houses. Fast forward to 1983, when a study by the Rural Advancement Foundation International found only 79 varieties of tomatoes, 12 of sweet corn, and 28 of cabbage preserved in the federally-owned National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation. It is estimated that 90 percent of historic fruits and vegetables have vanished in the United States alone, much of it in the last century.

Industrial agriculture is a major cause of the current lack of diversity among food crops. Big supermarket chains want fruits and vegetables that are bred to ship well and have a uniform appear-

ance. Extreme weather events, over-exploitation of ecosystems, habitat loss, and a lack of public awareness also threaten future plant biodiversity. Fortunately, seed saving is helping to preserve and bring back heirloom varieties that aren't typically found in your chain grocery store, and seed banks all over the world are preserving seeds for the future.

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is located 683 miles south of the North Pole. Known as the 'doomsday vault,' Svalbard has the capacity to store 2.25 billion seeds. Priority for space is given to seeds primarily from developing countries; seeds that will ensure food production and sustainable agriculture.

In Decorah, Iowa, the nonprofit Seed Savers Exchange is collecting, growing, and sharing

heirloom seeds and plants. Their mission is to "conserve and promote America's culturally diverse but endangered garden and food crop heritage for future generations...." Seed Savers Exchange maintains a collection of over 20,000 vegetable, herb, and plant varieties, including some 1,000 varieties of heritage apple trees. Over 13,000 members are growing and saving seeds in their home gardens across the country, which then are shared among the membership. Non-member gardeners can purchase a wide selection of seeds (currently some 600 varieties) from the Seed Savers Exchange Catalog, which helps support their work. Heritage Farm, where Seed Savers Exchange is headquartered, is open to  
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LaRuth Martin & Suzanne Horton, Editors

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visitors from March 1 through October 31, where you can shop, explore gardens and trails, and take a gardening or seed saving workshop.

For a truly local seed saving experience, check out the new seed library at our own Coliseum Boulevard Branch Library (840 Coliseum Blvd.). Coliseum staff hopes gardeners will come in and avail themselves of seeds to grow and harvest. Take just what you need, then save seeds from what you grow and re-

turn them to the library for others to plant next year. Best of all, it's FREE!

### References

Seibert, Charles. "Food Ark." National Geographic, July 2011. <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/07/food-ark/siebert-text>. Accessed June 9, 2017.

Food Tank. "Update on the World's 15 Largest Seed Banks."

Farm Journal's AgPro, August 1, 2013. <http://www.agprofessional.com/news/Update-on-the-worlds-15-largest-seed-banks-217990631.html>. Accessed June 22, 2017.

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"Mission." Seed Savers Exchange. <http://www.seedsavers.org/mission>. Accessed June 22, 2017.

## Pathfinder: Saving Seed

### Research Notes

Gardening has never gone out of style, but a recent trend in gardening, seed saving, and food preservation among younger generations has resulted in a wealth of material on seed saving, mostly online. A Google search for 'seed saving' yielded over 37,000,000 results, so you may want to refine your search terms. Look for reputable sources such as organic and heirloom seed catalogs, and national and regional gardening organizations. University Extension Services websites are an invaluable resource, and their information is based on hard science.

### Databases

EBSCO Discovery Service

Gale Virtual Reference Library

National Geographic Virtual Library

### Suggested Websites

<http://www.seedsavers.org>

<https://www.rodalorganiclife.com>

<https://www.seedsave.org>

<http://almanac.com>

<http://motherearthnews.com>

<http://nativeseeds.org>

### University Extension Services Websites

Alabama Cooperative Extension Service: <http://www.aces.edu>

University of Minnesota: <https://www.extension.umn.edu>

Oregon State University: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu>

Clemson University: <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/>

### Nonfiction

Coley, Micaela and Jared Zystro. *The Seed Garden: The Art and Practice of Saving Seed*. Seed Savers Exchange, 2015.

Heisteringer, Andrea. *The Manual of Seed Saving: Harvesting, Storing and Sowing Techniques for Vegetables, Herbs, and Fruits*. Translated by Ian Miller. Timber Press, 2013.

Jeffery, Josie. *Seed Swap: The Gardener's Guide to Saving and Swapping Seed*. Roost Books, 2013.

Article and Pathfinder written by Karen Preuss, Assistant Library Director, Montgomery City-County Public Library

