



Seeds of Diversity Canada

Our Projects

- **Seeds of Diversity magazine** This 40-page magazine is published three times a year and is included with membership. It presents a range of articles on gardening, seeds, heritage vegetables and fruit, plant science, genetics, and history.
- **Seed Exchange** Our annual Seed Exchange gives Seeds of Diversity members access to over 1,800 varieties of vegetables, fruit, grains, herbs, and ornamental plants in a member-to-member exchange. Two-thirds of these varieties are not available from any seed company in North America! Our Grower Members conserve and offer these seeds to ensure that the varieties can be grown, tested, and adopted by gardeners throughout Canada.
- **Seed-Saving Education** Our handbook *How to Save Your Own Seeds* offers complete information for saving and storing seeds of common vegetable crops, and is now available in English and French. As well, we offer seed-saving workshops and demonstrations at events across the country and throughout the year. Our educational slideshow and read-along script is available for members to borrow at no charge, anywhere in Canada. The slideshow features over 100 images of heritage vegetables, fruit, and ornamentals; gardens; and gardeners, and outlines the history of gardening in Canada, the origins of crop diversity, the importance of a healthy crop gene pool, threats to crop diversity, and what people are doing to preserve this important resource. The slideshow also demonstrates the simple techniques of seed-saving, for a general gardening audience.
- **Heritage Plants Database** Seeds of Diversity has undertaken this long-term project to document plant varieties of regional, cultural, economic, and historical significance to Canadians. Visit our free, online Heritage Plants Database to find information on 19,000 varieties of cultivated plants. Over three-quarters of these plants are endangered and need to be grown and multiplied. We intend to document their traditional uses and valuable characteristics, to encourage gardeners to regrow them and save them for future generations.
- **Canadian Tomato Project** Seeds of Diversity invites all gardeners to grow a Canadian tomato. We have identified over 100 tomato varieties with a Canadian origin, and we need your help to collect them and test them across the country. All new garden tomato varieties of the past ten years have been bred in the US, not developed for Canadian conditions. Although many Canadian tomatoes are “older”, they were bred for our cool spring conditions and often perform better than the “newer” southern varieties. Our Canadian Tomato Project encourages gardeners to grow a Canadian tomato and to record observations on its growth. We provide free seeds to our members, and observation forms are free to everyone online.
- **Great Canadian Garlic Collection** Canadians deserve to grow and eat great garlic, but more than half of supermarket stock is imported from overseas, and most of our domestic garlic is only one variety (“Music”). Canada could have a vigorous garlic industry, and gardeners could have many more varieties to choose from, but sources and information are surprisingly scarce. Seeds of Diversity has accumulated a collection of over 30 varieties, and has recruited 53 volunteers to grow them across Canada in 2005–2006. Growers will record detailed observations, greatly enhancing our knowledge of these varieties and their performance in different regions. You can help! We want to double the size of the program next year. All it takes is about 15 square feet of garden space and a commitment to grow two varieties of garlic for two years.



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● **Conservation and Education Gardens** We have installed a heritage seed garden at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in Toronto to initiate seed conservation in cemeteries. The Mount Pleasant Heritage Seed Garden was created to celebrate the 175th anniversary of Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries, and opened in 2001 to wide acclaim. It has been a source of inspiration and information to many visitors.

We helped to create the award-winning Eglinton Park Heritage Community Garden a decade ago in a joint venture with the North Toronto Green Community. This garden has inspired and educated many of Toronto's community gardeners, changed pedestrian traffic in the park, been a site for environmental workshops, and offers an exciting opportunity to volunteers. Community gardens are a tremendous resource for seed conservation and education, and we intend to pilot several more across the country in the coming years.

The Seeds of Diversity Garden at the Everdale Environmental Learning Centre is a public conservation and education garden where our volunteers produce seeds of over 100 heritage varieties of vegetables and fruit every year. Public tours and workshops in this living seed-saving project allow gardeners, farmers, and schoolchildren to see and touch our shared horticultural heritage in a beautiful rural setting.

● **Seedy Saturdays** Seedy Saturdays are community gatherings where gardeners meet to share and purchase seeds of rare plants and to learn how to grow and propagate them. Dozens of these events take place annually across the country. Seeds of Diversity has been closely involved with them for many years.

● **Pollinator Watch** Canadian gardeners and farmers depend on pollinating insects to turn flowers into fruit. Over \$1.2 billion of Canadian fruits and vegetables such as apples, pears, and cucumbers need insects for pollination. Tragically, wild and domesticated populations of these "pollinators" are threatened with loss of habitat, uncontrollable parasites and diseases. An agricultural calamity is nearing, if we do not begin to conserve our essential pollinating insects and the places where they live. Seeds of Diversity is leading the way with a new project aimed at recruiting volunteer observers to record the activities of pollinating insects throughout Canada in partnership with the Ecological Monitoring and Networking agency of Environment Canada. The information will guide experts to restore this essential natural resource.

● **Systematic Horticultural Description Keys** We designed this technical project to help non-technical gardeners describe their plants in a systematic way. A common system of description is a missing link in many horticultural projects and it will revolutionize the ability of amateur gardeners to contribute toward plant testing. With funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Seeds of Diversity has developed plant description keys that are scientifically designed and easy to use. These will become a fundamental tool in many of our future projects.

● **Policy Work on Agricultural Genetic Resources** Seeds of Diversity is the NGO representative on the Expert Committee for Plant and Microbial Genetic Resources, which advises the Canadian government on issues relating to agricultural genetic resource conservation. We have also represented Canada in international delegations to the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources.

● **Cooperative Seed Rejuvenation with PGRC** Under a longstanding agreement with Plant Gene Resources Canada, the federal seed bank centred in Saskatoon, our members help rejuvenate seed stocks and record information about vegetable seeds and grains from the collection. PGRC holds over 100,000 accessions of seeds as a public resource and provides samples for researchers and seed collectors throughout the world. Our members obtain samples of rare seed varieties from the gene bank, grow them in their gardens, and gather fresh seed to be returned to the federal seed bank for long-term storage. Our members carefully observe accepted guidelines to assure purity and quality, and are free to keep saved seeds for their own use, for exchange, or for commercialization.

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www.seeds.ca