

# Seeds of Diversity Handbook for Organizing a Seedy Saturday



## INTRODUCTION

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Seedy Saturdays are a remarkable phenomenon. They are not one event, but a series of separate events, which have sprung up across the country, each individually and uniquely organized under the general themes of encouraging the use of open-pollinated and heritage seeds, enabling a local seed exchange, and educating the public about seed saving and environmentally responsible gardening practices.

### **What makes a Seedy Saturday (or Sunday or anyday)?**

- Focus on heritage seeds and garden-related knowledge sharing
- Inclusion of a community seed exchange
- Non-profit, community-based event
- Low or no cost for entry

Seedy Saturdays have mainly been organized by individuals and community groups who see a need for gardeners, vendors and organizations to have a low-cost local venue where they can learn from one another, exchange ideas and seeds, and purchase seeds and plants. Gardeners, seed companies, nurseries, gardening organizations, historic sites, and community groups have banded together of their own volition to represent themselves under the umbrella of this unique educational and promotional vehicle, not for the commercial benefit of any one company, group or individual, but for the benefit of all participants: visitors, vendors and exhibitors alike.

Each Seedy Saturday event is different, because each grows from the effort and ideas of local volunteers. This diversity allows Seedy Saturdays to make the best use of local resources, tailor to regional interests and meet the needs of local audiences. Canada is a diverse country: every Seedy Saturday deserves to be different.

### **Who can host a Seedy Saturday?**

Anyone and everyone! Seedy Saturdays have been hosted by individuals, volunteer committees, established public sites, churches, gardening groups, non-profit organizations, farmers, and others. Seeds of Diversity does not organize or host individual events, but helps with event promotions and supports local organizers in a variety of ways.

### **The Role of Seeds of Diversity**

*Our role in Seedy Saturdays is to:*

- ❖ promote events across the country
- ❖ help coordinate dates
- ❖ participate as an exhibitor when invited
- ❖ provide educational and support materials: please visit [seeds.ca/Seedy-Saturday/volunteers](https://seeds.ca/Seedy-Saturday/volunteers)
- ❖ help facilitate idea and best practices sharing between organizers
- ❖ offer mentorship for new organizers

As a non-profit gardening organization, Seeds of Diversity is pleased to participate as a regular exhibitor at all Seedy Saturdays, providing that we can locate volunteers to represent us. Visit [seeds.ca/Seedy-Saturday/organizers](https://seeds.ca/Seedy-Saturday/organizers).

## PLANNING YOUR SEEDY SATURDAY

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### FORMING A COMMITTEE

First, identify the various groups in your area who work with seeds. These can include university plant or pollinator scientists, members of Seeds of Diversity, botanical groups, local organic groups, local wildflower societies, local seed companies who sell open-pollinated varieties, historic museums with heritage gardens, local seed-savers, garden clubs, and so on. Find out who the contact people are, and ask if they would help organize an event. If not, ask them to come as an exhibitor or speaker.

Once you have a group to help, divide the jobs. **For example:**

Venue management (set up, tear down, signage)	Advertising and Promotion
Seed Exchange Coordinator	Food
Education (Workshops, Speakers, Interactive displays)	Treasurer
Child Area/Childcare	Volunteer Coordinator

Some committees meet quite regularly for months leading up to the event, the others divide tasks and work more independently. In any case, make sure everyone is clear on the budget and agreed on the tasks and timelines necessary to pull the event off smoothly.

Having a post-meeting within 2 weeks to discuss ideas for the following year while they're still fresh can be a big help with future events.

### SETTING A BUDGET

*Appendix D features a sample treasurer's report.*

### CHOOSING A DATE

Most Seedy Saturdays are held January-April, giving seed savers time to process and package their seeds from the previous year, but before gardeners need to start seeds for the upcoming growing season.

#### A few things to consider:

- Coordinate date scheduling with other Seedy Saturdays in your region so vendors don't have to choose between events to attend (some vendors will travel <500km for a larger event at which they could have sales). Check events at [www.seeds.ca/events](http://www.seeds.ca/events). You can see this year's events, but also you can change the drop down box to show last year's events, to see when all events took place (we often don't know all events until later in the season).
- Do you want to include seedling vendors? If so, a later date may work better.
- In many Canadian climate zones, some seeds need to be started indoors by February or March so earlier dates will better accommodate seed sales and swaps.
- Watch out for Easter, Stanley Cup weekend or conflicting events in your community.
- Seedy Sundays can work too!
- **Choose the venue before the date**, it's easier to vary the date than be disappointed when you can't find a venue on the date you've already chosen.

Most events are held from 9:30 or 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Vendors have stated that attendance usually drops significantly after 3:00 and they like to have time to pack up and travel home.

## CHOOSING A VENUE

Some smaller communities try to link their Seedy Saturday with a location such as a library or farmer's market, which brings people out. Others choose locations because they are free, pleasant, a good size, or centrally located. Often organizers have co-sponsors who own a hall which becomes a natural venue for the event.

### A few considerations in selecting a venue:

- Cost
- Size and number of rooms for exhibitors, presentations and other activities
- Access to public transit
- Parking
- Availability of tables, chairs and A/V equipment

Exhibitors don't get as much exposure if they're in a separate room from the seed exchange and vendors. Try to book a hall with a large enough room for everyone to be together. Workshops, speakers, videos, food space, children's area, *etcetera* can be sited in separate rooms.

## PROMOTIONS

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Without promotions, it's hard to bring a lot of people to your event. A mix of social media, posters and cross-promotions with your partners and vendors will probably be necessary to get the word out – especially until your event is fairly established. Here are a few ideas of ways to advertise:

### Social Media

- Make a Facebook event and share with our [Seeds of Diversity Canada Facebook page](#)
- Use Twitter and blogs - our Twitter handle is [@Seeds\\_Diversity](#)
- Let [Seeds of Diversity know](#) about your event: we'll link and promote from Facebook page
- Encourage vendors and exhibitors to promote through their social media

### Online Promotions

- Let Seeds of Diversity know ([office@seeds.ca](mailto:office@seeds.ca)) and we'll get you on our [events listing](#)
- Have community partners advertise on their websites
- Get your event on your local events listings pages

### Posters

- Keep your poster simple and catchy
- Post at libraries, farmers markets, grocery stores with community bulletin boards, local businesses, local garden-related events etc
- Give vendors & exhibitors posters to help with promotions at other events they attend

### Traditional Media

- Write a press release for your local media
- Contact your local tv & radio stations for on-the-day coverage or pre-event interviews
- Use community newspaper event listings (often free)

## The Qualicum Beach Seedy Saturday Committee has a few tips ...

They suggest that radio ads are most useful within the last seven to ten days prior to event, and live interviews provide the most info. Choose someone with a broad knowledge of all aspects of the event and a good speaking voice. They also suggest that you try to get an article written by a freelance writer or an on staff writer on the reasons why Seedy Saturdays are being held, this year's theme, and a special feature or speaker. If you have the funds, run an ad at the same time elsewhere in the paper.

In developing your promotions, include the following information:

- date, time, location
- names/logos of all organizing partners
- types of vendors
- seed swap – encouragement & requirements to get involved
- any workshops/presentations being offered
- cost/suggested donation

If you wish to take advantage of Seeds of Diversity's national publicity, please notify [office@seeds.ca](mailto:office@seeds.ca) or [judy@seeds.ca](mailto:judy@seeds.ca) as soon as you know your event date. This information can be brief—time, date, venue, city, province. Updates can be sent in later - we post detailed information right up to the date of the Seedy Saturday on our website.

## RUNNING YOUR EVENT

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### SEED EXCHANGE TABLE

This is really the heart of a Seedy Saturday event. The exchange facilitates the trading or purchasing (for a minimal donation) of seeds saved by local community members. Most organizers have found that their seed swap areas – even if completely unsupervised – are rarely abused. That said, having a volunteer or two at the table can greatly help improve its organization!

#### Some Seed Swap tips:

- Get the word out ahead of time that seeds should be packaged and clearly labeled with the type of seed, year saved and ideally the # of seeds included in each package. Any extra information about the variety and where it was grown are great!
- Have envelopes, pens & labels (masking tape works!) available at the table for those who didn't do their packaging & labeling ahead of time
- Have a consistent suggested donation or price for seed packages if you're making them available to people who didn't bring their own to trade
- Create different tables or zones for the different types of materials expected (e.g. seeds, rhizomes, plants) and perhaps further subdivide seeds into smaller categories such as tomatoes, beans, other vegetables, flowers etc.
- Use lots of signage – if possible, place them up above head level so participants can easily read them even if there's a crowd.
- Keep the tables as neat and organized as possible throughout the day to make for easier selection

- Be prepared to provide lots of bags and boxes of different sizes for the public to carry away their new materials.
- Use envelope boxes to hold the seed packages upright rather than just scattering the packages on the table. If a label showing the type of seeds in each box is placed both on the front and back of the box, then volunteers can replenish the seeds without removing the box from the table.
- Give volunteers distinctive clothing so participants can easily see who to get advice from
- Have a float with plenty of small change if you're selling seeds
- Identify an organization to donate any leftover seeds to

### **Examples from experienced organizers:**

- In Victoria, each person who brings in seed fills out a registry for each variety, supplying basic information about where the seed was grown and its characteristics
- In Winnipeg, seeds are spread out according to type--perennials, annuals, herbs, and vegetables. People are given a ticket for each packet they bring in and can exchange the ticket for another packet of seed.
- In Durham, organizers give suggested quantities to place in each packet for different types of seed (e.g. 25 tomatoes, 100 onions, 50 beans)

A smaller community can afford a seed exchange with a greater spontaneity. Many organizers found that the first year they held this event, few people brought seeds to swap, so don't be discouraged if the exchange doesn't take off right away!

## **VENDORS & EXHIBITORS**

Most events invite a variety of local organizations and non-profits to have tables at their event. This can be a great way to add educational value, create more local investment, and help attract attendees.

### **Exhibitors**

Consider inviting organizations of an organic, horticultural or ecological nature to have tables at your event. Keen organizations may even become partners - helping with promotions and finding volunteers.

Sometimes non-profit exhibitors are asked for a donation or charged a nominal table fee (usually \$10-30).

### **Vendors**

Not all Seedy Saturdays include vendors, but including vendors can certainly help boost community interest in your event. Some events do not have any selling of seeds, choosing to keep all the focus on the seed exchange.

If you're inviting vendors, here are a few things to consider:

- Will you ask for an advance deposit to hold their spot?
- Will you charge a table fee? If so, a flat rate or a percentage of sales?
- Will you provide tables? chairs? electricity? Make sure vendors are clear on what will be available and what they need to bring themselves
- When can they set up? When do they have to tear down by?
- Ask seed vendors to bring only bring open-pollinated seeds, not hybrids

Write up an agreement so everyone is clear on fees and expectations.

You may want to consider having all exhibitors and vendors sign waivers, in the unlikely event that their materials or goods are damaged or stolen, or one of their representatives is injured.

*See Appendix A for some ideas of exhibitors and vendors to invite. Appendix B is a sample letter to invite potential vendors.*

### **Food Vendors**

Some organizers invite local restaurants or local/organic caterers to sell food at their events. Many events invite other non-profits to offer food or host their own Seedy Café or where they sell baked goods or other snacks as a fundraiser. Attendees love being able to buy a snack or lunch, or at least have an area where they can sit and share ideas over a cup of coffee!

## **EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

### **Workshops and Speakers:**

You may want to invite local experts in various aspects of seed conservation to speak or conduct a workshop. These experts include the vendors at your event and speakers (list available by request). Also consult the list at <http://www.seedsecurity.ca/documents/resources/Trainers-List-ENGLISH-08.2013.pdf> Appendix C has a list of workshop & presentation ideas. You could pay speakers, waive table fees, give gift certificates or simply ask for volunteers.

Workshops often work best run in separate rooms from the vendors and seed exchange. The number of workshops will be affected by how much space you have, how difficult it is to find presenters, your budget for paying speakers, and the number of attendees you expect.

The Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador's "Root Cellars Rock" initiative has developed a series of downloadable food skills workshops at <http://rootcellarsrock.ca/food-skills-workshops/> These include detailed outlines for workshops and activities on Seed Saving, Container Gardening and Composting and a number of other topics.

### **Children's Activities:**

You may want to consider having a children's area with activities running throughout the day. These could include: painting and drawing, planting seeds, seed card/papermaking/crafts, Seedy Jeopardy, seedy BINGO, a scavenger hunt or other games. A local 4H club, church, or school may be able to offer some help.

### **Interactive Displays**

Interactive displays are a great way to engage attendees: Observation hives, seed cleaning displays, seed sorting activities and seed ID games are just a few ideas for setting up interactive activities right on the trade show floor.

## **ENTRY FEES, DONATIONS & FUNDRAISING**

Most Seedy Saturdays are free or inexpensive to attend. Entry fees generally range from 0-\$5, often collected as "suggested donations." If you're collecting door fees, don't forget to bring a sufficient float!

You may want to solicit donations for raffles or door prizes. Exhibitors may be willing to donate gifts, which can be raffled to raise funds. A coat check can also be an effective fundraiser.

Many events collect donations specifically for Seeds of Diversity or other non-profit organizations, or donate a portion of their proceeds.

### **EVENT SIGNAGE**

Clear signage is important so people can find their way to and around your event. Try to include:

- Large signs or sandwich boards on the road to direct people to your venue
- Door signs to direct people to various rooms
- Signage for donations/admission fees
- Seed Exchange table signage
- Large signage for children's activities, café or any other special areas

### **TRACKING MONEY AND ATTENDANCE**

Attendance at Seedy Saturdays across the country varies from a few dozen to over 2000. Events often grow with time as momentum builds and word spreads. Keeping track of attendance and revenue helps with budgeting and planning in the future. It's also helpful for Seeds of Diversity to track trends across the country from year to year. Even if no fee is charged, handing out door prize tickets is one way to keep track of attendance.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

In addition to your organizing committee, you may want to attract some volunteers to help with tasks such as set-up, display staffing, front door, exhibitor hosting, managing the seed exchange table, workshop A/V, and cleaning up. Have a suggestion book on hand that volunteers can write feedback in throughout the event.

### **EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS:**

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#### **Seeds of Diversity has the following available:**

- Seed Saving and Pollinator Gardening books
- Table Setup Instructions & FAQ for Volunteers; please visit <http://www.seeds.ca/d/?n=print/SoDCresources/SeedsOfDiversityTableInstructionsAndFAQ.pdf>
- Slide Show for presentations
- Biodiversity Poster & Canadian Seed Library posters
- Pollination Canada materials
- Table signage for donations
- and more; please visit [seeds.ca/Seedy-Saturday/volunteers](http://seeds.ca/Seedy-Saturday/volunteers)

Contact us at [office@seeds.ca](mailto:office@seeds.ca) or call 226-600-7782. Seeds of Diversity members may reserve many more items (ask for list) that are available for member volunteers staffing our table or presenting a seminar for Seeds of Diversity. Please make your request for all materials at least 4 weeks in advance of your event and write your mailing address on the request.

*Please note that many events are taking place in February and March, so book all materials early. When you request anything from us, please state how many of each you want.*

## Seed Catalogues

About 2 months before the event send an e-mail to all the heritage seed companies at [www.seeds.ca](http://www.seeds.ca), asking them to mail some copies of their current seed catalogues. At the event, make the catalogues available for people to pick up. This is a very popular idea.

## Workshop Planning Resources

The Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador's "Root Cellars Rock" initiative has developed a series of downloadable food skills workshops at <http://rootcellarsrock.ca/food-skills-workshops/>  
<http://usc-canada.org/resources/creative-campaigning/>  
<http://usc-canada.org/resources/teach>  
<http://seedmap.org/>  
<http://www.usc-canada.org/name-that-seed/> - this can be set up and played at Seedy Sats <http://usc-canada.org/storyoffood/> <http://usc-canada.org/histoire-de-bouffe/>  
<http://usc-canada.org/biodiversity/>

Seed-saving power-points and training materials are available on [www.seedsecurity.ca](http://www.seedsecurity.ca)

## WANT MORE HELP OR IDEAS?

Visit other Seedy Saturdays! Talk to organizers of existing events. We can help match you with an experienced organizer if you'd like. Contact [office@seeds.ca](mailto:office@seeds.ca).

## APPENDIX A – Examples of Exhibitors & Vendors to Invite

### Gardening and Seed Saving Organizations

Seeds of Diversity  
 USC Canada  
 Composting Council of Canada  
 Canadian Organic Growers  
 Master Gardeners  
 Local horticultural societies  
 Seed libraries  
 Community Gardening groups

### Ecology & Environmental Organizations

North American Native Plant Society  
 Canadian Wildflower Society  
 Field naturalists  
 Outdoor Education Centres

### Farms and Farming Organizations

Rare Breeds Canada  
 Beekeepers & Beekeeping Associations  
 Local farms (vegetable, fruit, herb, grains)  
 Ecological Farmers of Ontario  
 4H Clubs

### Other Organizations

Local historical groups  
 Horticulture clubs  
 Museums with heritage gardens  
 Kids clubs  
 Libraries  
 Local government composting, gardening or rain barrel programs

### Vendors

Canadian Seed Companies (for a list of companies and contact information, visit [seeds.ca/diversity/seed-catalogue-index](http://seeds.ca/diversity/seed-catalogue-index): Canadian Seed Catalogue Index under Seedy Resources tab at our website)  
 Local artisans  
 Garden supplies vendors  
 Seedling growers  
 Native plant nurseries  
 Beneficial insect companies  
 Sprouting businesses  
 Vermi-composting suppliers  
 Caterers/Bakeries/Prepared food vendors

**APPENDIX B – Vendor Invitation Letter**

Here is a sample letter that went to growers/vendors in Montreal for their first Seedy Saturday:

Dear Friends,

This is an invitation for you to take part in a very special event. On Feb. 24, 2001, Eco-initiatives and Seeds of Diversity Canada will be holding the first ever Seedy Saturday in Montreal.

As you are no doubt aware, the numbers of people interested in gardening and in growing their own food just keeps expanding. More and more, gardeners are looking to have something different in their gardens. They are concerned about genetically modified food and are looking for local, organically produced seeds for their garden. Seedy Saturday will provide the opportunity for those people to come together and buy or exchange interesting and unusual heritage varieties of vegetable and flower seeds.

As you are a commercial seller of heritage seed, Seedy Saturday will give you access to gardeners who are looking for exactly what you have to offer. For a charge of \$20 we will provide you with a table to display your product.

Many environmental organizations will be invited to set up information tables. Music and food stands will add to the festive atmosphere.

Seedy Saturdays have been held in other parts of Canada for years now with great success. Our day will take place at the Unitarian Church of Montreal, 5035 de Maisonneuve West on Sat. Feb. 24 from 1 to 4 p.m. If you are interested in participating please let us know by....

We look forward to seeing you there to help us make Seedy Saturday a tremendous success. If you have questions please call....

**APPENDIX C – Workshop and Presentation Topic Ideas**

Seed Saving	Container and Balcony Gardening	Organic pest control	Beneficial Insects
Seed Cleaning	Eco-landscaping	Seedling starting	Attracting Pollinators
Vermicomposting	Garden design	Indigenous seed saving projects	Building pollinator habitat
Spring garden prep	Growing Heritage Tomatoes (potatoes, grains, etc.)	Permaculture	Sprouting
Composting	Natural lawn care	Forest Gardening	Gardening with native plants
Urban Agriculture	Community Gardens	Food preservation	School gardens

**APPENDIX D – Treasurer’s Report**

The following is a sample treasurer's report after a Seedy Saturday (from Edmonton)

Income		
	Admission, includes float	\$600
	Donations	\$150
	Table Rentals	\$225
		\$975
Expenses		
	Hall Rental	\$150
	Signs –shipping	\$20
	Coin Rolls	\$1.06
	Hand Stamp	\$1.50
	Lath for signs	\$4.00
	Float	\$100
		\$276.56
Income over expenses:		\$698.44

**APPENDIX E – Seed Pledge**

Here is a safe seed pledge used with permission from the Sooke Seedy Saturday

***Seed and Plant Pledge for Sooke Seedy Saturday***

*The goal of our Seedy Saturday is to promote local ecologically grown seed and plants and support local seed producers and growers. The people coming to our event expect all the seeds and plants at the event to be GMO free, safe for our environment, grown out by the vendor or at least clearly indicated if not grown by the vendor, and clearly labeled as such if invasive. You can learn more about which species are considered invasive at <[http://www.coastalisc.com/images/stories/CRISP/CRISP\\_IP\\_Species\\_List\\_web.pdf](http://www.coastalisc.com/images/stories/CRISP/CRISP_IP_Species_List_web.pdf)>*

***GROWER/VENDOR STATEMENT for Sooke Seedy Saturday***

By signing, each vendor selling seeds confirms that:

1. you are not knowingly selling GMO seed or plants;
2. the seeds/plants you are selling have been grown out by you or your designate, either on your property or an offsite location that you approve;
3. the seeds/plants you are selling have been grown out by another grower for which you have an exchange arrangement in place, and you identify this detail in your respective catalogues or at your table;
4. any seed/plants grown by farmer(s) you do not know are clearly identified as such at your table, in your respective catalogs or on your seed packets.
5. Any seeds/plants you sell considered invasive are labeled clearly as such.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please return **this page only** to [seedysaturday@gmail.com](mailto:seedysaturday@gmail.com) or include with your exhibitor application.