
NYACK COMMUNITY GARDEN

July-August 2019

Types of Seeds

Seeds are something most of us don't think much about. However, without them we would most likely perish. Over 50% of the food we eat started out as a seed and much of the other 50% eats food that started as a seed. Botanically speaking a seed is a fertilized ovule that contains an embryo encased in a seed coat. But a seed is really a fantastic capsule of life that has the power to use light and water to transform itself into something completely awe-inspiring.



Every winter when seed catalogs start to turn up in the mail I get a little giddy thinking about the transformation each one of those little capsules will go through if properly cared for. And although all seeds go through the same process of germination not all seeds are created the same way.

You may notice, as you turn the pages of your colorful and enticing seed catalogs, three categories: open-pollinated, hybrid and heirloom. And if you have been scratching your head wondering what the difference between these three categories is, you're in luck because I'm about to tell you.

Open-pollination

Open-pollination is done by nature. Maybe the wind carried some pollen from one plant to another. Perhaps a bird or insect picked up pollen in his travels and deposited it several feet away. Open pollinated plants are more genetically diverse which makes them less susceptible to pests and disease. The seed from an open-pollinated plant will be true-to-type which means the plant you get from the original plant's seed will resemble the original plant.



Hybridization

Hybridization is when the pollen of two different species or varieties of a plant is crossed. Hybridization can occur naturally but most often it is achieved with human intervention. F1 hybrids are plants that are commercially hybridized to bring out a specific trait such as resistance to a certain pest or disease. If, year after year, your tomatoes suffer from blight you may want to try an F1 blight resistant variety. The seed from these plants is not true-to-type so you will need to buy new seeds each year.

Heirloom

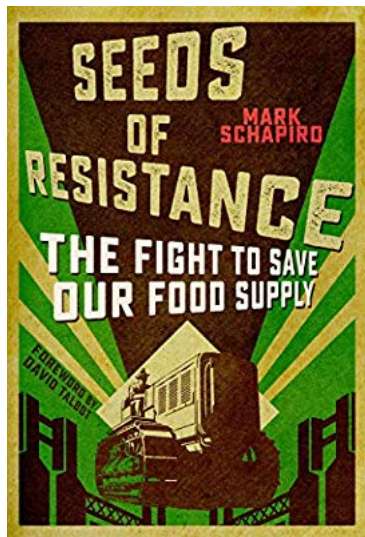
The definition of heirloom seeds varies a bit depending on who you ask but generally defined it is seed that has been passed on from one generation to another within a community for at least 50 years. Heirloom seeds are always open-pollinated and often have interesting stories about their history.

--Nicole Brait



Seeds Going Extinct???

It was shocking to most of us when, back in May, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization released a report that estimated that around 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades. This is more than ever before in human history. What most of us thought of when we saw this was the loss of animal species such as the rhino, the elephant, and the polar bear. But the report specifically includes plant species, too.



There is an important book (available at Nyack Library) called *Seeds of Resistance: The Fight to Save Our Food Supply* by Mark Schapiro, a lecturer at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism. The book is succinct and understandable; it is written by a journalist and not a scientist. But he has done his research, too. He explains the threat to our food supply caused by the loss of biodiversity of seeds. Since the beginning of life on earth, the natural genetic material in seeds have allowed the crops most adaptable to their growing conditions to do well, while others die out unless they have been transported elsewhere on the planet and start to flourish where growing conditions are different. So, over the millennia, this created this incredible diversity of plants (and seeds) in different places around the world, as well as a diversity of animals adapted to eating them and helping to spread their seeds. What

threatens this diversity is the proliferation of industrial agriculture itself and the planting of the same seeds over and over again, without consideration paid to all the different environments and growing conditions on the planet, let alone the rapid changes in those conditions due to climate change.

Schapiro writes of the additional danger that comes from the takeover of the seed business by 3 giant companies: Monsanto, DuPont, and Syngenta and their ability to patent their seeds. All three companies have now also merged with or been bought up by 3 giant chemical companies, so they are now Bayer-Monsanto, DowDuPont and Syngenta-ChemChina.

For the 10,000 years of agriculture on earth farmers have been storing the naturally-adapted genetically diverse seeds from their harvests for future planting. The triumvirate now dominates industrial agriculture worldwide, (and therefore most of our food supply for the entire planet). Once the seeds are patented, farmers cannot legally save seeds and use the saved seeds to plant again in later seasons. And so as long as the large farmers continue to use these monocropped, genetically identical seeds in their fields, there is little possibility of natural cross-breeding, which increases the genetic diversity of the plants and their natural adaptability to their environment.

Schapiro is not writing exclusively about genetically-modified seeds, where genes from a different species can be worked into the seeds of another species. Instead he targets *patented* seeds. So this includes genetically engineered seeds but also some F1 hybrid seeds that are used in industrial agriculture that can be patented because they have been commercially hybridized to carry a specific trait (without relying on genes from another species). The biggest danger of either of these means of altering seeds and patenting them is not any immediate threat to public health, but it is the *lack of diversity* of the seeds being planted today worldwide. And when there is little diversity, plants are even more vulnerable to disease, insect infestation and devastation of a crop due to drought, extreme temperatures, or flooding, all of which we are seeing more frequently due to the changing climate.



Schapiro gives the example of the corn blight of 1970 in the Midwest of the US. Farmers had been monocropping with a hybrid seed (note that this was *before* GMOs) that was bred to eliminate the need for de-tasseling of the corn to exclude the prospect of cross-pollination, so it saved the farmer lots of effort and time. But when a fungus started attacking the corn crop, farmers who were all using the same seeds, were themselves being wiped out along with their crops. A variety of heirloom corn seeds from different parts of Mexico, the birthplace of corn, were brought in to rescue the Midwest farmers. Having that genetic diversity of different heirloom seeds allowed the planting of corn that was more resistant to the fungus and saved the farmers and the country from starvation. Schapiro makes the analogy of planting the same hybrid seeds over and over with the “fate...which struck inbred royal families whose descendants grew progressively weaker as the gene pool of their parents shrank.”

Schapiro quotes a report from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN in 2015 that “declared that $\frac{3}{4}$ of all the world’s crop varieties that were around at the turn of the 19th century had become extinct.” And he then quotes another study about the implications of this: “One important consequence of increased crop homogeneity is the potential for yield instability with anticipated increased unpredictability in weather patterns associated with climate change.” “Not only are local seed varieties being displaced by vast fields of identical seeds, the future adaptations that the lost parent lines could create if given the chance to mix it up in the gene pool are forever eliminated. This is occurring just as growing conditions are reaching unprecedented levels of uncertainty.”

Schapiro writes of the movement to collect indigenous seeds from around the world and store them in seed banks. He also mentioned the threat that these seed banks of indigenous seeds themselves are facing. The biggest in the world, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, dug into a mountain above the Arctic Circle on the coast of Norway, was recently discovered to have some water flowing into it from the melting of the surrounding permafrost due to warming temperatures. (They are working on securing it now, but they had never thought this would happen in the first place, when they first built it – it opened in 2008). So we need to make every effort to protect those heirloom seeds in banks, vaults, and in the natural world. Our food supply may depend on it.



And we need to continue to garden ourselves! The diversity in our garden allows for cross pollination. Maybe we can use heirloom seeds when we can. And we can save our own seeds, or share them amongst ourselves or through the Nyack Seed Library (housed in Nyack Library). But we still need to work for the massive changes that should take place in our larger food system.

--Kathy Schwarz

Nyack Community Garden Has Joined the Climate Victory Gardening Program



During World War I and World War II, people throughout the United States planted gardens at their homes and in public spaces as a way to grow more food and help contribute to the war effort. These plots produced a whopping 40 per cent of all vegetables consumed in 1943. Now, an organization called Green America is seeking to build upon this tradition of Victory Gardening, though a project called the Climate Victory Gardening Program—and the Nyack Community Garden is taking part!

Laura Pakaln (plot 32) spearheaded the effort to join this program, and she put me in touch with Jes Walton, the Food Campaigns Manager of Green America. Jes explained the program as follows: “We aim to use economic power to create a green society—which we define to be socially just and environmentally sustainable. We work with consumers, investors, businesses, and the marketplace, knowing that individuals and consumers are often the pressure point for economic change. Right now, there’s no label and no clear way

for individuals to support regenerative agriculture in the grocery store. So, we’re focusing on Climate Victory Gardening using [regenerative gardening practices](#), with the hopes that individuals and

consumers will be familiar with the terminology and goals behind regenerative as soon as it's something we have in the marketplace. We're ahead of the curve!"

By joining the program, the Nyack Community Garden joins a grassroots movement of food growers who are creating positive environmental changes through our gardening efforts. As Jes said, "we like to point to movement itself, and the potential for inspiration and change that can come from a grassroots uprising of like-minded gardeners and citizens that care about a sustainable food system and livable planet. Climate change can feel like an unsurmountable obstacle, but planting a garden is possible, and it's part of the solution. This campaign gives individuals a tangible action to take in the fight against climate change."

To learn more about Climate Victory Gardening, see this [toolkit](#) and [expert column](#), and check out their [Facebook group](#), where people ask questions, network, and share events related to Climate Victory Gardens.

--Liz Cherry

Plant-a-Row Loves What You Grow

Please help us fill the cooler near the shed! Pickups Mondays at 10am.

The Plant-a-Row for the Hungry Project

Please join us in this great national effort! Now that our gardens are producing more than just lettuce, you will notice a green cooler in the garden near the shed as well as a crate inside the shed. The cooler and crate are an invitation to every Nyack Community Garden member to share our bounty with hungry families in Rockland. Plant-a-Row for the Hungry is a national organization founded in 1995 to encourage gardeners to donate produce to local food banks. Our local committee is led by Jill Remaly and an enthusiastic team of our fellow gardeners. Jill reports, "It is such a delight to arrive at the back door of People to People and hear the volunteers exclaim, 'Yay! Vegetables!'"



Combating Food Insecurity

You may think that Rockland County is an affluent county with few hunger problems, but one in five children in Rockland County lives in poverty, and about 45,000 Rocklanders are "food insecure," meaning they do not know where their next meal is coming from. People to People -- and our donations from the Nyack Community Garden -- help to fill that gap. People to People feeds about 1,400 families each month, and garden donations help ensure that neighbors in need receive healthy, fresh vegetables. The fresh produce we donate is all the more important and useful to families who lack access to healthy foods.

How Can You Help?

“Tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, as well as more robust greens such as Swiss chard and kale are all great,” says Jill. “Lettuce is not ideal for collection as it suffers pretty quickly without refrigeration.” The committee purchased the cooler and ice packs so the produce can withstand the heat. Jill reminds us that there is also a **donation crate in the shed** for your less fragile veggies. When selecting produce from your garden to donate, please consider donating only what you would eat yourselves. If it’s not appealing to you, then it’s probably better off going in the compost instead of the donation bin. Finally, Jill asks that gardeners bundle their greens and herbs with twine that will be in the blue crate in the shed. There will also be plastic bags in the shed to make collecting easier.



When to Give – Sunday Evenings or Monday Mornings before 10am

Sunday evenings or Monday mornings are good times to put some veggies in the cooler, because a Plant-a-Row team member will pick up donations around 10am every Monday morning and deliver it straight to the food pantry. But please donate anytime you can during the week. And if the cooler is full, that’s fine: there is also a crate in the shed for weekday and weekend donations and overflow.

Let’s Beat Last Year’s Numbers!

Betsy Turk and her team from the Nyack Garden Club have an entire plot dedicated to growing food for People to People. It is tended by members of the Garden Club, and we can multiply the plot’s good impact by giving some of our extra vegetables to the cause. Jill Remaly said that last year we donated a whopping 860 pounds of produce—more than double the previous year! Let’s try to beat last year’s numbers by donating even more this year. Jill said that last year’s success was due to the Nyack Garden Club plot and to people having the Plant-a-Row committee harvest their plots while away on vacation.

Going on Vacation? Please Email Jill

If for any reason you cannot make it to the garden for a period of time, please don’t let your produce go to waste. The Plant-a-Row committee will harvest and donate for you! If you will be out of town, just send an email to Jill -- jillremaly217@gmail.com -- with your name, plot number, and the dates that you will be away. The Plant-a-Row team will be happy to harvest your ready produce so it is not wasted while you are away.



Jill Remaly and the Plant-a-Row team thank you in advance for your generous help in making this effort a healthy success for neighbors in need.

--Liz Cherry

2019 Dates to Remember

Mondays, around 10am Plant A Row veggies in cooler will be given to food bank

Wednesday, July 24, 10am Garden Contest Judging

Thursday, Oct. 17 Pot Luck Dinner with prizes awarded to attending contest winners and free raffle for all attendees

Saturday, Nov. 2 Garden closes, all items removed and plots restored to state as of April 7

Saturday, Nov. 9 8:00 AM sharp: Winter prep clean-up

Nyack Community Garden Contest - July 24

Stay ahead of the weeds, gardeners! The annual garden contest is approaching! The date is Wednesday, July 24th at 10 AM, rain or shine. The categories up for awards this year are:

- Best Vegetable and/or Flower Garden
- Best Maintained Garden
- Most Creative Garden
- And the Grand Prize for Best Overall Garden

Judges will inspect and evaluate all plots and choose the best overall best plot, as well as winners for maintenance, creativity and horticulture. There is also an award for best cluster. The contest winners receive spectacular ribbons which will appear in the winning plots soon after the contest. The Potluck Dinner on October 17 will also have the presentation of prizes to contest winners.



The competition will be fierce, since there are so many plots that look so fantastic. Good luck to all!

Save the Date for the Pot-Luck Dinner!

See you on Thursday, October 17



The annual Pot-luck Dinner of the Nyack Community Garden always has great food. Gardeners each bring a dish of their choosing that will serve ten or more. There is an abundance of tasty items ranging from soups to desserts. Typically, both meat-eaters and vegetarians have delicious options. Many dishes include produce grown at our garden, but store-brought items are welcome, too. The Dinner is a time of great conversations, including terrific gardening discussions. What's new this year to make our evening even better?

- Awards ceremony with gifts to the winners of the Garden Contest in attendance.
- An opportunity for all gardeners in attendance to win a special gift. You will receive a raffle ticket and there will be a drawing.
- A “more the merrier” invitation to gardeners to bring a spouse, a friend and/or children. Please bring a larger “pot” if your contingency is large.

Drinks are provided and the event takes place in the evening at the Nyack Senior Center. Adrienne Alarco (adriennealcaro@rocketmail.com) is the chair of the Pot-Luck Dinner committee, and she and several other committee members will be organizing this year's event. We look forward to seeing you there!



News you can use!

Death to Vines!

The fence behind your garden must be vine-free 24/7. You are urged to become a serial vine killer.

Seeds of Thought:

“Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.”
— Robert Louis Stevenson

Coming or going?

Please don't forget to lock the gate.



Give a hose a chance!

Don't forget to turn the hose off after use. Then open the nozzle and drain. Thanks!

Seeds of Thought:

If you think in terms of a year, plant a seed; if in terms of ten years, plant trees; if in terms of 100 years, teach the people.
- Confucius

A Message from Your Newsletter Team

It's your newsletter, so please send us your garden story or let us know what you want to read about. We'd love to hear from you.

Liz Cherry elizcherry@gmail.com

Nicole Brait nebrait@gmail.com

Kathy Schwarz Katherine.schwarz54@gmail.com

Michelle Morales mzmichelle@hotmail.com

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Notes from the Board:

Please notify us at nyackcommunitygarden@gmail.com if our garden information has incorrect information for you such as wrong name spelling, email, phone number, plot number, committee assignment, or address OR if you change any of these.

While we do not email revised lists every time an update is made to all members, the up-to-date information is always posted on the bulletin board on the door of the shed.

Nyack Community Garden Executive Board

John Dunnigan (plot 16)	co-president	pickwickbooks@gmail.com	358-9126
Lynda Grant (plot 42)	co-president/secretary	lhgrant1@gmail.com	358-2175
Marie Dilluvio (plot 15)	treasurer	mvenus1220@aol.com	358-5877
Jill Remaly (plot 37)	member	jillremaly217@gmail.com	358-3427
Laura Pakaln (plot 32)	member	lpakaln@verizon.net	358-0593

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