

hogco - organising a community seed swap

When it's all over

Thank the seed companies! Consider writing a press release with your great pictures and ideally, include quotes from people who were there. You may have had 30 people at your event, but with publicity about how lovely it was, next time you might have 100! Please let HogCO know how it went too.

It's friendly to pass on your left-over, un-swapped seeds from seed companies to the next local seed swap if there is one close to you. Ask us, or look online (try the Seedy Sunday website).



Finance

It's a good idea to have one person track all money spent, keeping receipts and reporting on your outgoings and income. Remember to use your powers of persuasion to convince as many people to provide things at low cost, or free, as possible! You may not need all of this, but consider costs of:

- Deposits (for venue and equipment)
- Venue hire
- Equipment hire (e.g. tables, projectors, crockery)
- Speaker and volunteer expenses (e.g. travel, meals)
- Printing of posters, flyers, etc
- Out-of-pocket expenses (e.g. cash book, drinks for meetings)
- Supplies (e.g. seed packets, labels, pens)
- A 'float' (a supply of change for stall holders and the people collecting entry fees)
- Event insurance.

This info was compiled with help from these sources (more resources can be found on their websites):

The Seedy Sunday website
www.seedysunday.org

There are helpful checklists and factsheets on this site

The Real Seed Company
www.realseeds.co.uk/why.html
Great info on why seed saving is so important

Motherearthnews website
www.motherearthnews.com/Organic-Gardening/How-To-Organize-A-Community-Plant-And-Seed.Swap.aspx

Seed Companies — try your luck!

Suttons
Woodview Road, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7NG
0844 922 2899

Edwin Tucker & Sons
Brewery Meadow, Stonepark Ashburton, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ13 7DG
01364 652233

Real Seeds
PO Box 18, Newport near Fishguard, Pembrokeshire SA65 0AA
01239 82110 info@realseeds.co.uk

Dobies of Devon
Long Road, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7SX
0844 701 7623

Thompson & Morgan
Poplar Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk IP8 3BU
0844 2485383 ccare@thompson-morgan.com

Unwins
Elm House Nurseries, Alconbury Hill, Huntingdon, PE28 4HY
01480 443395

Secret Seeds
PO Box 2965 Bristol BS2 2BJ United Kingdom
0781 7026676 enquiries@secretseeds.com

For more information: info@hogco-devonrcc.org.uk 01392 383423 www.hogco-devonrcc.org.uk
HogCO, Community Council of Devon, The Old School Huts, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX24QB



home grown - community owned information sheet

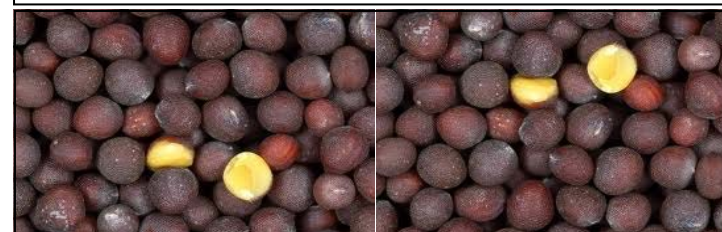


community seed swaps

Seed swaps are fun, lively events where you can swap your own saved seed, or seeds donated by seed companies.

There are lots of benefits to swapping seeds:

- Swapped seeds are free, or very cheap
- They are likely to be well-suited to your local growing conditions
- They often come with first-hand advice on how to grow them
- Seed swapping helps protect plant biodiversity
- Community seed swaps are great places for meeting local people with a shared interest in growing food and protecting the environment
- Seed swaps can become exchanges for all sorts of useful local knowledge, as well as seeds.



Choose a time and place

Depending on how many people you think may attend, you could offer the swap in someone's home or garden. Or, if you expect to draw a larger crowd, look for free spaces you can reserve, such as a public library meeting room or a church hall.

Good times to hold swaps are October / November, after the growing season has ended so people have had time to collect and prepare their seeds, or February/March, when people are starting to think about the new growing season.

Depending on what else you want to offer, your swap could be just a 2 hour event, or could stretch from 10 - 2 pm with events dotted throughout.

You can charge a small entry fee to cover the cost of room hire, or ask HogCO for help and use the money raised another way!



Request seed donations from local gardeners or seed companies well in advance, to bolster the offerings that people will bring. You can offer to highlight their support by a poster on the day, or on your flyer. Emphasise that you are a non-profit group. Having a range of seed potatoes for sale can be a good idea - bought in bulk and sold on in smaller quantities. Try some blue ones!

Publicise your seed swap. A good place to start is by notifying local gardening groups, the WI, transition/environment groups and the local allotment association. You can also reach interested people through a press release to the local paper, small ads on community notice boards and parish newsletters, signs in windows, notices in schools, health centres, pubs, the library, word of mouth, items on local radio, a website, chatrooms, Facebook, banners pulled by aeroplanes ...you get the picture!

There are model press releases on the Seedy Sunday website. HogCO can help you publicise your seed swap, too - send us some info and we can add it to our website. We can also help with printing costs for flyers.



Events during the day

Contact your local gardening groups to find experts who know *how* to save different kinds of seeds, and can get people talking about *why* to save and share seeds.

Try and have examples of seeds still on the stalk, or demonstrate how to separate seeds from a tomato - you'd be surprised what people don't know.

You could seek speakers about:

- *Seed politics* - seed swapping, the domination of giant seed companies, how the seed listing process has outlawed traditional varieties
- *Food* - climate change impact, real versus processed food, globalizing food
- *Biodiversity* - what it is and how seed swapping protects it
- *Practical* - how to save seeds, how to grow vegetables, composting, allotment gardening, container growing, etc
- *Interest* - heirloom varieties, the National Seed Library, other seed swaps
- *Linked subjects* - local food, local environmental or gardening projects.

Advertise a real live 'gardeners question time' and have the group ask their questions to the panel. You could also show a short film during the day.

While doing all this is more work, you may find it generates more interest and people visiting your event.



Photo by Lou Brown.



Stalls and resources

You will need at least one main stall or table, which is where the seed swapping happens. You will also need a table at the door, so someone can collect entry fees. This stall could provide information about seed-swapping and your group - a good way to recruit seed collectors for next year. You may also want to have some other stalls; they add to the pleasure and usefulness to the day, and you can charge stallholders a fee to help cover your costs. Find out whether stalls or tables are available from the venue, or whether you have to hire them separately. Some stallholders may want to bring their own, so check this is OK with the venue.

The Seed Swap stall should be:

Conspicuous

It should look and feel like the main attraction. Put it in the middle of the room or at one end. Make big, clear signs, so that visitors can find it easily.

Orderly

There will be a lot of people crowding round, sifting through packets of seeds, so make it easy for them to browse without blocking each other or mixing everything up. Sort the seeds by type of vegetable and put these smaller collections into containers, such as shoe boxes, clearly labelled. Visitors can then browse through a box at a time.

Helpful

Aim to have at least one person who knows about the seeds (what the varieties are like, how to grow them, etc.) looking after the stall at all times. One of the great pleasures of seed swaps is that they are mines of local knowledge and provide visitors and seed swappers with an opportunity to meet other local growers. People choosing seeds will appreciate being able to ask for first-hand advice about them.

Label everything clearly

Bring plenty of little dishes, or bags and markers, to help gardeners divvy up and identify everything. Ask seed and plant donors to write down everything they know about their seed that might be helpful. For example: "Green Zebra Tomato: open-pollinated, heirloom, saved from last season, has grown well in my garden for years, heavy producer, medium size fruit, indeterminate growth habit, about 70 to 80 days to maturity, good slicer, amazing tart flavour, attractive green and yellow stripes".



It may help to give your donors cards or envelopes that they can fill out, with all these variables. They may not know all the answers, but any information could be helpful. A seed swap is all about learning from each other, after all.

Other stalls

You could invite other stalls to join your event. If you decide to do this, aim for a good mix of stalls that sell things, give out information and provide practical demonstrations. Decide how many stalls can fit in the venue, then contact local organizations to ask whether they want to run a stall. Stick to things that are likely to interest seed swappers, such as:

- Book stalls
- Plant stalls
- Craft stalls
- Seed doctors (giving advice on how to grow from and collect seed)
- Tool sharpening demonstrations
- Seed-growing demonstrations (sowing, thinning out, etc)

- Children's activities (growing seeds on cotton wool or in bottles, or making things with seeds)
- Information about community food, gardening or composting projects
- Information on local horticultural courses
- Information on local environmental groups
- Information about local allotment groups.

Print off some handy articles

The Seedy Sunday website has factsheets about seed-saving and other gardening techniques to distribute to the gardeners who attend your seed swap.

seedysunday.org/category_idtxt__factsheets.aspx

Raise Funds

You could host a contest to make the event more fun! Prizes could go to the gardener with the widest variety of seeds, the attendee who travelled the farthest, the youngest or oldest gardener, etc. You could organise a raffle, a quiz or other fund-raising ideas.

Take lots of pictures, and estimate about how many people came through the doors.

