

# PEAS FOR THE PEOPLE!

## a grower's guide to seed sovereignty

written and illustrated by rosa for BHOGG

**Consider** a seed for a long moment. This tiny quiet speck contains all the information needed to crack its hard coat open and grow into a plant that will feed you and a whole web of other organisms. It knows how to build mutual relationships with the teeming life of soil, knows how to eat sunlight and convert it into sugars and oxygen for us to breathe and eat.

It knows how to alert its plant neighbours to pests, how to call to pollinators in a language of flowers, and how to navigate all the complexities of life without getting up and walking around.

Seeds evolved approximately 385 million years ago.

This teeny tiny seed contains the memories of its parents and all previous generations, stretching back hundreds of millions of years and surviving five mass extinctions.

### Wild Ancestors

Around 11,000 years ago, the ancestor of this seed and all the other crops that now feed us entered into a mutual relationship with our human ancestors. In return for care and cultivation, our bellies were filled. The seeds of these crops were shared across lands from neighbour to neighbour, and passed down from generation to generation.

"Farmers, seed savers, Indigenous peoples and communities have stewarded seed and bred new varieties for millennia. However, what was once an unburdened everyday day act of care now carries new meaning. It is resistance." A Growing Culture, 2026.

Each seed grew into a distinct variety, intimately adapted to the family and soil it nurtured and was nurtured by; freely pollinated, exchanged, and shared from field to fork. No two varieties were the same, and the genetic diversity of seed across the earth was as varied and intricate as the cultures and ecologies that grew them.

### Patented peas?

Since 1900, we have lost 75% of this diversity. More than 50% of our food now comes from 4 main crops: wheat, maize, soy, and rice. From allotments to arable fields, 60% of the global seed market is owned, controlled and patented by 4 multinational corporations. In the US, patented crops account for over 90% of soybean and corn production.

This seed has been specifically bred by these companies to produce the largest possible profit for the cheapest possible production, no matter the consequences. Uniformity over diversity. Profit over planetary flourishing.

Farmers and gardeners cannot save patented seed because it is (intentionally) infertile and will not produce viable offspring. These seeds are known as F1 Hybrids. In some cases, saving and sharing this seed with others is illegal because seed is the property of the companies. So each year, farmers and gardeners must buy new seeds, shipped in by wholesalers from across the world.

Being infertile and genetically identical, the seeds are unable to adapt to the intricate variations in local conditions. Instead, they require vast amounts of chemical inputs; pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, and artificial fertilisers which must be bought in. Guess who owns most of these inputs? Those very same companies. The production of these inputs guzzles huge amounts of fossil fuels. The fertiliser industry alone emits 2.4% of worldwide GHG emissions each year. This monopolisation of seed has disproportionately impacted Indigenous peoples, peasants and small-scale farmers worldwide.

### Seeds for the banks?

The dominant approach to safeguarding the future of seeds and their genetic diversity is to collect them and store them in vast high-security vaults called seed banks. Whilst safeguarding seed diversity for the future is deeply important, many of these seed banks reflect and maintain the power imbalances and injustices that have caused the loss of heritage and landrace varieties in the first place

"Seeds that compose most of the seed vaults' archives are collected from communities, but rarely find their way back to their original grounds. On the contrary, these materials are given over to corporations to edit their genes and incorporate the most profitable traits into new market releases. The same genetic materials taken from communities are then sold back to them." Bianca Villanova, 2026.

"A seed means both this millet, our goats, and one's children. All grow from this land. Hybrid seeds have brought bad things. We lost our indigenous seeds, our soils became sick, and our pollinators disappeared. But we were told the only solution was to buy chemicals!"

-Salome Gatumi, Seed Custodian and Elder of Tharaka, Kenya

The seeds sold back to communities are now owned by multinational corporations; infertile, patented seed dependent upon chemical inputs which keep farmers under the thumb of corporate power.

WE ARE THE SEEDS.

Sow seeds of freedom, grow webs of care.

Please turn over...

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## a grower's guide to seed sovereignty

A Living Library of Seeds

**B. H. O. R. G. O. G. U.**

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Seeds are living creatures, as reliant on seasonal cycles of life and death as we are. Community seed libraries keep them alive, safeguarding seeds for future generations through grassroots networks of growers.

Rather than banked away in vaults, seeds of landrace and heritage varieties are held in common and distributed in the community: grown and harvested by people on the ground.

Some fill our bellies and some are saved and returned to the library, ensuring the survival of that specific variety whilst also allowing the seeds to continue to adapt to ever-changing environmental conditions.

### What is Seed Sovereignty?

Seed sovereignty is the right of every grower to "to save, use, exchange and sell their own seeds." Seed sovereignty puts seeds back into the hands of growers and gives them autonomy over how they grow and whom they feed. Seed sovereignty ensures that the dazzling genetic diversity of crops is not lost and gives communities resilience in the face of climate and other crises.

"Diversity boosts resilience in any system because it mitigates risk, providing a variety of solutions for any given challenge. Genetically diverse seeds, grown in a biodiverse environment by a diversity of people, make our food system more adaptable to unexpected, extreme stress; whether droughts, floods, or the collapse of global supply chains." ~The Gaia Foundation.

Seeds that are not patented are called open-pollinated seeds. These are the seeds of heritage and heirloom varieties of crops. Each tells a millenia-old story; the place-specific tale of human-plant-soil symbiosis, of adaptation and experimentation. Seed sovereignty ensures the survival of these stories, and the germination of thousands more. It returns peas and power to the people and protects our right to nourish ourselves and our soils and every creature in between.

### What can we do?

**Save and share**  
...your own seed wherever possible. It is easier than you think, and instructions can be found via the QR code.

**Tell your friends!**  
Due to systemic disconnection from nature and the land, many in the UK have no idea about seed sovereignty. Like a seed, this knowledge is small but powerful. Everyone can help us reclaim our seeds.

**Think global, act local**

As A Growing Culture writes, "if it wasn't for the persistent and defiant resistance of Indigenous peoples, peasants and small-scale farmers, corporate-controlled seeds would have taken over our fields and tables long ago". Wherever possible we must be in solidarity with those in the Global Majority on the frontline of defending our rights.

Scan for resources to take action.

**Sow community...**

Find and join your local seed library or seed swap- see the link to find one near you.

Buy open-pollinated seed, grown and saved by small-scale suppliers! Scan for a list of excellent suppliers.



"We are fighting for the future with a diversity of greens Every time they squash us, we grow squash!"  
From 'We Are the Seeds' by Liv Torc

"I think we need to reseed ourselves as humans. In this time, we need to reckon with the fact that each and every single one of our bodies holds living memory of our ancestors coming into agreements with plants and animals. They said, "we'll give up a little bit of our wildness." And the plants said, "we'll give up a little of our wildness." And we came together in the promise to take care of each other.

When we talk about reseeding people, not everybody's going to be a farmer or a gardener, but we all have an ability to come back into a deeper understanding and a relationship with those foods and plants and beings who feed and nourish us every day."

-Rowen White, farmer of the Akwesasne Mohawk community and founder of Sierra Seeds and the Indigenous Seedkeepers Network

### How to save your own peas seeds...

#### peas

Let the peas mature until the pods are brown and the seeds start to rattle. If the weather forecast is very wet, pull up the whole plants once the pods start to wither and hang them up inside to let them ripen and dry fully.

Once the pods are really dry, shell the peas out and spread them out on some baking paper to fully dry in a warm (but not hot) place. Once the peas are completely hard and dry, put them in a paper envelope, label with the variety and date, and store in a cool, dry and dark place.

#### Tomatoes

Tomatoes are also easy to save. Select a few ripe tomatoes from the plant that is happiest. Cut them in half and scoop out the seeds from the middle of the fruit into a jar, (eat the rest!). Put the jar of seeds and juice in a reasonably warm place for 3 days, stirring the mixture twice a day. This allows the seeds to ferment, removing the jelly coating and killing off any hitchhiking pathogens.

After 3 days the mixture should be mouldy and stinky. Add plenty of water and give it a stir. The good seeds should sink to the bottom. Carefully pour off the mould and any floating seeds and compost them.

Then empty the good seeds into a sieve and wash them thoroughly under running water. Tip the seeds out onto a plate. Dry somewhere warm but not too hot, and out of direct sunlight. Once they are completely dry, rub them off the plate and store in a cool dry place, where they should keep well for at least 4 years.

