

Seed Library of Galiano Society

How it began

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2015

- The Galiano Community Food Program was hosting a seed-saving workshop by Dan Jason of Salt Spring Seeds. I was a program coordinator with the Food Program at the time.
- At the end of the workshop, Dan presented the group of attendees with a box containing approximately 50 different seed varieties. A gift, for us to start our own seed library. But also, an enormous, sobering responsibility.
- There were 30 of us in the room and we all looked at each other, unsure of who would take the leadership role. A long silence followed.
- Would an organization such as the Food Program or the Galiano Conservancy Association take this on? Or, would a seed library be run by an ad hoc committee?

First Decision: Who?

- We all had a general sense of how much work it would take to organize a seed library. Soon after, a meeting was organized to discuss various options. There was agreement that whatever route we took it had to be done well.
- In the end, it was decided that the Food Program had capacity to begin coordinating a seed library:
 - I was a paid coordinator who could allocate some time to organizing the collection.
 - Another advantage was that funding would be easier with the Galiano Club Food Program being a registered charity.
- There was consensus that eventually, the seed library would grow into its own independent organization.



Meetings, Meetings, and, More Meetings

- ▶ There was a call-out for interested community members to form a steering committee.
- ▶ Approximately 12 people came together and we started meeting monthly to hash out:
 - Mission statement
 - Where the seed library would be stored
 - How we would organize the Seed Inventory
 - Expectations around borrowing seeds: what information did we want to get back from borrowers?
 - Educational materials needed
 - Equipment and supplies needed
- ▶ We happened to have the energy of a young co-op student from UVIC to help us. Thank you Kat!

Mission Statement

After several months of consideration, our mission statement came together:

- ▶ “To preserve and loan organically grown, non-GMO, open-pollinated, locally successful and genetically diverse seed varieties to the Galiano community;
- ▶ To provide educational opportunities and information to the Galiano community on growing and saving seed.”



Physical Organization of the Collection

- ▶ We decided that our Seed Inventory would be divided into three categories of seeds:
 1. General Collection (40% seeds)
 - available for all members to borrow and *hopefully* return
 2. Designated Grower (40% seeds)
 - growers who have been approached/volunteered to grow specific varieties, as a way of maintaining seed integrity
 3. Reserve Collection (20%) - Seed Bank concept, preservation
 - ▶ - South End: Community Library Collection
 - ▶ - North End Fire Hall Collection



Physical Organization

- ▶ All our edible, annual seeds are stored in envelopes, alphabetically arranged in plastic containers, held in large storage tubs at the Community Library in a storage closet.
- ▶ Every seed packet has a unique identifier code so we can track the seed packet through its life cycle.
- ▶ When we have Seed Lending Days, we pull everything out and provide a drop-in time in the Library Meeting Room.
- ▶ Seed Lending Days happen in the spring; Seed Check-in Days are scheduled in the Autumn
- ▶ Our Seed Lending and Seed Intake Days are run by Seed Library Society volunteers, not the Community Library volunteers.



Seed Crop Record

SEED LIBRARY of GALIANO CROP RECORD, 2017

Common Name: (e.g. Bean, Pea)	Grower Name:	Code
Botanical Name:		
Variety: (e.g. Black Turtle, Bush)		
Year Seed Grown and Collected for you the borrower (not by you):		

SEED SOURCE

Where did the seed last come from? Who held the seed before you planted it?
(eg: seed company, SLOG, family heirloom, friend, your own saved seed)

If From Seed Library Stock - Year Borrowed from Library:
How long have you been growing this seed at the current location? Other locations?

GROWING INFORMATION

Date first planted:
Approx # of Seeds Planted:
Approx. Germination Rate (%):
Did you try growing the seeds multiple times? If so, how many times?

If you transplanted your seedlings, what date (s) did you transplant?

Number of Plants Grown:
Productivity - Low Moderate Vigorous
(Circle):

Location on Property (Circle all that apply): Outdoors Greenhouse Cloche

Number of Days Seed to Food:
Number of Days Seed to Seed: Date Ready to Eat (Even Small):

Date Seed Harvested:
At time of harvest, where the plants grown in pots or in the ground?

RESILIENCE: Did your plants encounter any problems? Please circle all that apply.

Blight	Mildew	Heat Stress	Scorching	Over-watering	Root Rot	Neglect
Drought	Lack of Water	Failure to Thrive for Unknown Reason				Other
Pests: rodents, birds, wood-bugs/pill bugs/ caterpillars, wire worms, cabbage moths, beetles						Other

Would you grow this again?

Other relevant information (flavour, ease of threshing, etc):

- ▶ Cindy Conner's book, "Seed Libraries and Other Means of Keeping Seeds in the Hands of the People" was an invaluable resource.
- ▶ Every seed packet lent out is accompanied by a Seed Crop Record.
- ▶ We've also developed an online questionnaire option for borrowers to fill out as an alternative to the paper copy.

Thank you for your diligence.

Please return to SLOG in the Fall.

Fall intake dates will be provided.

9-Months Later...

- ▶ We launched in February 2016 once all the details were worked out.



SLOG Society

- ▶ We became our own society in August 2017.
- ▶ Becoming a society has facilitated greater funding opportunities.
- ▶ We have received a grant from the CRD (Capital Regional District), to organize a Seedy Saturday in 2018, and to pay for basic supplies such as envelopes, labels, and paper.



Membership

- ▶ We charge a lifetime membership fee of \$10 per household; no one is turned away.
- ▶ Members may borrow as many seeds as they wish.
- ▶ We currently have 70 household memberships belonging to the Seed Library of Galiano.



Educational Workshops

- ▶ Thanks to funding through the Bauta Family Initiative and a partnership with the Galiano Conservancy Association, we have hosted seed-saving workshops.



Challenges

- ▶ Volunteer burn-out
- ▶ Competing events on a small island: “There’s always lots to do.”
- ▶ The skill set required for seed management: detail-oriented growers. Preferably introverts. Not easy to find.
- ▶ SLOG has a paper-intensive system that is partially duplicated by an electronic database. We can’t eliminate the paper because it is more practical in the field. Meanwhile, the electronic system is powerful for analysis.
- ▶ Lack of a more robust database linked to an electronic scanner;
- ▶ We get an approximate 30% return rate from our “General” borrowers who return seeds at the end of the season. Thankfully, our Designated Growers’ offset this amount.



What Makes Galiano Unique

- ▶ There is a strong volunteer culture on Galiano. The general expectation is that good systems require volunteers. All of our local organizations, such as the community library, recycling centre, and health care centre, rely heavily upon volunteers.
- ▶ Because we are on an island our vulnerability is more palpable. If anything happened to BC Ferries, if the main city centres were shut down due to earthquake or other natural disaster, Galiano Island would become isolated very quickly. There is a heightened consciousness of food security.
- ▶ As we are a small island, we are also conscious of our vulnerability to fire and what fire would do to our food supply.
- ▶ We have a small population of approximately 1044 residents. We know who the food growers are and have forged strong links with them.

Goals for 2018

- ▶ Seedy Saturday, January 2018: increase local awareness of the importance of seed-saving to food security
- ▶ Increase local education about how to save seed
- ▶ Increase our capacity as an organization to maintain the seed library
- ▶ Expand our seed inventory to include more varieties
- ▶ Find opportunities to eliminate some duplication in our record management