

Seed library at the Denmark Public Library

Objective

The objective of the seed library is to make available to the community a collection of organic, heirloom and locally grown seeds. Growers will plant, harvest and return some of this seed to the seed library so it continues to circulate for others to enjoy.

Why a seed library?

Denmark is a community where people value the opportunities to grow their own produce, promote sustainability and connect with others. Denmark library has a number of resources on gardening and horticulture which are very popular and it is expected that a seed library would be enthusiastically supported as a new initiative. The library is also approached by people who would like to volunteer in some way and this interest could be utilised in the seed library project.

The Denmark library has partnered with the Denmark campus of South Regional TAFE to provide some of the seed for the seed library. Through the horticulture programme at TAFE they will provide seeds harvested from their organically-certified garden that have adapted to Denmark growing conditions over many years. This is a good fit between the library and the TAFE, both of which aim to promote learning in the community, as well as providing the wider community with access to locally grown seed.

The seed library will:

- create new paths for community engagement with the library;
- encourage library members to 'think beyond books' and see the library as a dynamic and diverse part of their community;
- encourage library members to have a go at growing and planting produce in their own gardens;
- promote information sharing and knowledge between community members;
- build partnerships with other community partners such as the Denmark campus of the South Regional TAFE.

This initiative supports Shire objectives including promoting community partnerships and sustainability. In theory, a seed library can be self-sustaining but the library will have to be ready to provide resources to this project, for example staff time and the purchase of some seed each year. However, the partnership with TAFE provides an excellent source of seed. Seed saving is part of the Horticulture Production curriculum and it is anticipated that good quality, clean seed surplus to TAFE requirements will boost seed library stocks.

The seed library also provides the library with opportunities to address Shire planning focus areas of capacity building and social inclusion. It is hoped that access to free quality seed, seed saving information and related events will encourage library users to try growing and saving seed. Growing and returning seed will encourage people to be part of a community initiative, it is hoped that this project will reach members of the community that may not traditionally use the library. It will also

utilise the strong knowledge-base that exists in Denmark and promote knowledge sharing and networks within the community.

What it is

The seed library is a collection of seeds that you can take home to plant, grow and enjoy. It is an extension of library services. Seeds will be borrowed and users encouraged to allow some of these plants to go to seed so they can collect, dry and return seed to the library ready for circulation. Seed saving information will be available alongside the seeds.

The seed library uses seed made available from the Denmark TAFE campus certified organic garden. Many of these seeds have been harvested from organically grown plants that have adapted to Denmark growing conditions over many years, they are truly local. In addition other heirloom varieties will also be available, purchased from external suppliers.

The variety of seeds will vary according to what is available from TAFE and other suppliers, the type of seed returned by borrowers, and the time of year. It is anticipated that the seed library will consist of vegetables and herbs, with seasonal winter/summer seeds as well as some that can be planted all year round (or most of the year). The seed library will focus on vegetables with seed that is easy to save, and will 'start small' with regard to the number of varieties that will be made available.

Suggested seed to start the seed library

Year round (ish) seed	Summer seed	Winter seed
<i>Lettuce</i>	<i>Borlotti beans</i>	<i>Broad beans</i>
<i>Coriander</i>	Tomato	<i>Kale</i>
<i>Fennel</i>	Squash	<i>Calendula</i>
Carrot	Zucchini	Broccolini

Indicates seed TAFE have available at the moment (Mar20)

How it works – borrow, save, return.

Borrow - seed packets are prepared and made available in the library. These can then be borrowed by library members.

Save – the process of saving seed varies according to the plant. Seed saving information and access to books will help users educate themselves on how to do this.

Return – clean dry seed is returned to the library, with information about the seed, so it can be shared with other seed library users.

Events/learning opportunities

The library can organise events around the subject of seed saving to encourage participation and learning. These could include seed collecting and cleaning, external speakers with a horticultural background, kids activities including painting pots, pebble labels for the garden. Karlee Bertola, horticulture lecturer at TAFE, has indicated her willingness to be involved with facilitating events at the library or at the TAFE, and other local experts can also be called upon to give talks and make

themselves available to share their knowledge and encouragement. Activities for children can be incorporated into the library's regular schedule of school holiday programmes.

Resources

Time – staff and volunteers will be needed. Initial set up of the seed library will be time consuming, this includes sourcing seed, preparing and labelling seed packets, preparing seed saving information sheets, setting up a cataloguing and circulation system to capture statistics on the use of the seed library, and organising related events to promote the initiative. Volunteer help will be sought when seed is returned and needs to be bagged up into the seed packets.

Stationery – envelopes for seed packets, labels, paper for information sheets, container to store seed packets.

Seed – as much as possible will be sourced from the TAFE. Additional seed will be bought, preferably heirloom varieties, to offer a wider range of seed available for different times of the year. Some seed can easily cross-pollinate in a garden so buying some seed each year would be ideal to ensure quality seed is made available.

Events – there will be opportunities to have events either at the library or at the TAFE garden to promote the seed library and encourage participation and learning.