



Annual Report



November 2023–November 2024



canberraseedsavers.org.au



The Canberra Seed Savers Cooperative is a network of urban food growers and local farmers working cooperatively to protect our abundant, common heritage of open-pollinated food seeds. We swap and share seeds, learn and teach about seed growing and saving, and together build a resilient community network – a ‘living seed bank’. We welcome you to join us and be part of the local network of seed savers, growers and guardians.

Seed saving is for everyone.

Canberra Seed Savers respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we live, work, and grow, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people. We pay our deepest respects to their elders past, present and emerging, and we acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. We actively try to work with and learn from traditional custodians, and we imagine a future where their ancestral knowledge is foremost in land and food management.

Canberra Seed Savers Cooperative Ltd. Registration No. CO - 0212

Email: hello@canberraseedsavers.org.au

Web: www.canberraseedsavers.org.au

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/canberraseedsavers>

Instagram: @canberraseedsavers

Illustrations © Cat Mueller 2024



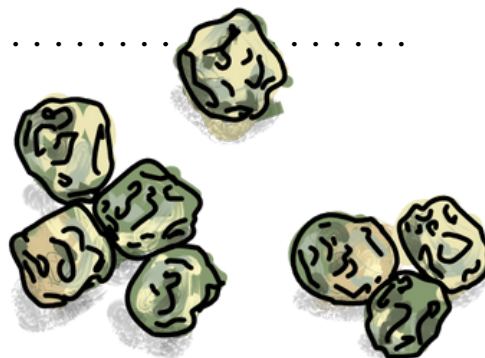
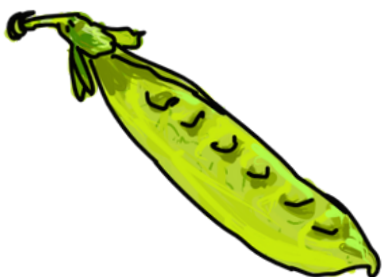
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I. Board Report

Arian McVeigh

board@canberraseedsavers.org.au

We hope you enjoy our 2024 Annual Report as much as we enjoyed doing the seedy things you will read about. Our community is diverse in so many ways but we also have a common core. We're passionate about seed growing and saving: growing plants from seed and sharing the seeds we produce. We love working *with* nature and harvesting the abundance she produces. We believe in working cooperatively to build our local seed sovereignty and security through a growers' network and regular education, community building and contributions, and social events. Many members of Seed Savers have extensive local knowledge of growing food and saving seeds and are very generous in sharing their wisdom and supporting newer members. And our new members bring the excitement and energy and fresh perspectives that help us to keep developing our organisation in ways that engage more and more Canberrans.

We are a truly local group, made up of backyard (and balcony) growers and farmers in Canberra and farmers and the Capital Region and we have a wealth of experience growing in our local climate and conditions as well as deep roots in our community.

Seed Savers is powered by volunteers who work on a range of groups and activities which focus on different aspects of the passion and enthusiasm our members have. From the Dwarf Tomato Project to the Community Seedlings Program, from Seed Bank Working Group to the Native Seed Saving Group, and the new Seed Guardians Program, there's something for everyone!

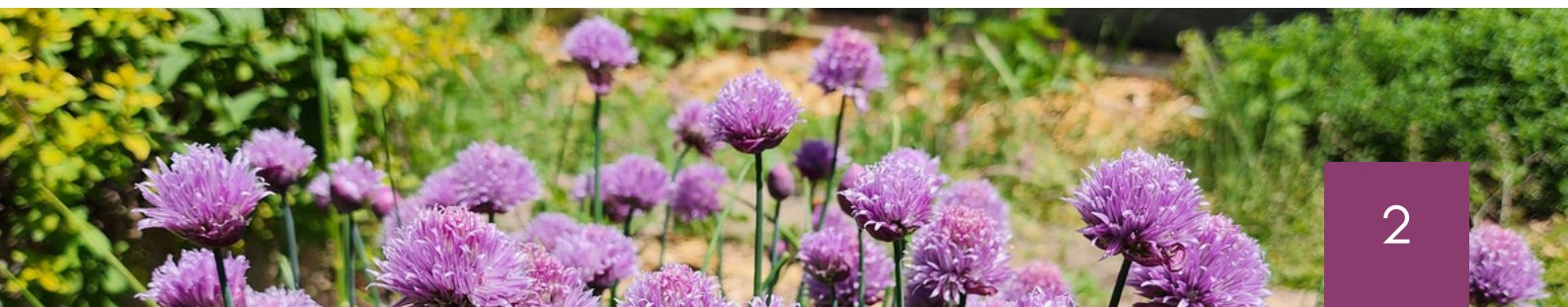


This year we started a new program: the Seed Guardians, which is focused on increasing our collective seed sovereignty and security by growing a range of popular food seeds locally to increase the seeds available for our community in our living seed bank. Volunteers are provided with starter seed, grow that at home, save the seeds from their best plants and return them to the seed bank. The program also includes a range of educational workshops and guides on how to save seeds, tailored to our local conditions.

The Dwarf Tomato Project has gone from strength to strength and the bumper harvest and seed contributions of 2023 set us up well for an exciting 2024-25 season which has just started. Community Seedlings continues to be much loved by volunteers and appreciated by many organisations and individuals in Canberra as an important contribution to access to fresh, healthy food for those in need. You can read about all of our programs throughout this report.

In 2024, Seed Savers collaborated with other local food organisations and the ACT Government to develop the ACT Region Local Food Strategy, an important piece of work which aims to develop a robust local food system which creates food sovereignty and food security for our local community. We will continue our work in 2025 to push for implementation of the Strategy.

The spirit of Seed Savers volunteers shines through in the Seed Bank Working Group who meet every week at the Canberra City Farm to pack and label seeds and organise the seed bank as well as share their seed saving experience and enjoy chats and home made snacks. The job of the Seed Bank Working Group is ongoing, working with the amazing donations from our network. Check out their report for more about developments this year.



Volunteers power everything that Seed Savers does – from running our programs to growing plants for seed, to person-ing stalls at markets or delivering workshops, to developing our communications and education materials, to being on the board or processing memberships, we are all volunteers. The board wants to thank every single volunteer who has contributed in 2024 for your work in building a living seed bank for our local community and supporting the growing network of seed savers who contribute to it. Through education, community connection, seed organisation and production, we are all part of it. We welcome you to join us and be part of the seedy fun.

You might have noticed that this year Seed Savers materials, communications and social media posts are enhanced by some amazing illustrations. This is the work of an amazingly talented volunteer whose passion for plants and seed saving shines through in her art. We are very grateful for her contributions. You can read more about this in the Communications Report.





Board Members



II. Treasurer's Report

Belinda Sierzchula

treasurer@canberraseedsavers.org.au

INCOME

Our income for the year was \$6,345.92. This was made up of seed sales of \$4,574.27 from various avenues (the Food Coop and Local Press, seed swaps, markets etc.), membership fees of \$1,320 and bank interest of \$148.72. Our seed sales and membership income have both increased this year.

GRANTS

No grant funding was received in 2024 but the final expenditure of \$763.96 for the Infrastructure Grant was completed in 2024.

EXPENDITURE

Our expenses for the year totalled \$5,286.47, including \$2,718.02 in equipment purchases (a gazebo, table, boxes & trolley for markets and a printer), \$763.96 to complete the infrastructure grant noted above, \$261.53 for insurance and \$721.88 in subscriptions & memberships (Zoom, Loomio, Hostinger & The Garden Club).

Expenses overall have decreased in comparison to last year, primarily due to there being less grant expenditure in 2024.

This leaves a surplus for the 2023-2024 financial year of \$570.21.

Each year the Board has worked with the idea not to make money, but to share the message of seed saving and to share the seeds in the seed bank with as many people as possible while maintaining a sustainable financial position.

Our current bank balance as at 30 June 2024 was \$7,689.75. This is a comfortable position for us to be in and gives us enough of a buffer to meet our current financial obligations for many years. It also puts us in a position to be able to invest in new projects that can further expand our reach into the community to support more people to learn and enjoy the benefits of growing and saving seeds.



Income & Expenditure Report

Canberra Seed Savers Cooperative Ltd

For the Financial year ended 30 June 2024

the numbers needed
updating yea?

Account Income	2024	2023)
Donations & Gifts Received		
Interest Income		
Membership Income	(2.00)	(15.00)
Sales - CEC Calendars	(141.66)	(148.72)
Sales - Food Co-op	(1,320.00)	(990.00)
Sales - Giles St Kitchen	(60.00)	(45.00)
Sales - Markets	(566.00)	(519.00)
Sales - Seed Savers Books	(562.45)	(0.00)
Sales - Seed Swap	(1,348.89)	(0.00)
Sales - Seeds	(248.00)	(320.00)
Workshops	(1,141.93)	(0.00)
Miscellaneous Income	(955.00)	(2,010.37)
	(0.00)	(3,290.00)
	(0.00)	(200.00)
Total Income	(6,345.93)	(7,538.09)
Cost of Sales		
Purchases - CEC Calendars	(90.00)	(0.00)
Purchases - Seed Saver Books	(342.00)	(342.00)
Purchases - Seeds	(57.25)	(1,701.95)
Workshop Supplies	(0.00)	(85.42)
Total Cost of Sales	(489.25)	(2,129.37)
Gross Income	(5,856.68)	(5,408.72)
Expenditure		
Accounting & Bookkeeping Fees	(0.00)	(225.00)
Advertising & Marketing	(0.00)	(53.90)
Bank Fees	(40.34)	(5.07)
Catering	(165.91)	(150.00)
Equipment	(2,718.02)	(0.00)
General Expenses	(444.90)	(394.00)
Grant Expenses - Infrastructure Grant	(763.96)	(2,674.00)
Grant Expenses - Community Support Grant	(0.00)	(700.00)
Insurance	(261.53)	(0.00)
Printing & Stationary	(0.00)	(101.80)
Rent & Stall Hire Fees	(131.98)	(70.00)
Seedling Program Expenses	(37.95)	(1,421.16)
Subscriptions & Memberships	(721.88)	(129.27)
Total Expenditure	(5,286.47)	(5,924.20)
Net Surplus	(570.21)	(515.48)
Add: Reserve funds in bank	(7,119.54)	(8,135.02)
Bank Balance at 30 June	(7,689.75)	(7,619.54)

Income & Expenditure Report Canberra Seed Savers
Cooperative Ltd For the Financial year ended 30 June 2024

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III. Membership Report

Nick Staniforth

membership@canberraseedsavers.org.au

This Report covers the period 2 December 2023 (last AGM) to 1 November 2024. This has been a year of steady membership numbers. As at 1 November 2024, we have 162 members, 11 more than at the time of the 2023 AGM at which time we had 151 financial members. Numbers have remained in the 150-170 band for much of the year.

NEW MEMBERS

To become a member a person completes an application, pays a membership fee as required by the legislation, and is then considered/approved by the Board. All Board members available at that time must agree to the person becoming a member.

To date, everyone who has applied for membership and has paid the required membership fee has had their application accepted by the Board. The Board hasn't had cause to cancel any membership.

The membership application asks people to provide a name, email address, phone number and postal address. Names and postal addresses of members are required by the Co-operatives legislation for inclusion of our register of members. Email addresses and phone numbers allow us to contact members, send regular newsletters, etc. Given privacy concerns, we no longer ask members to provide a date of birth, and we have deleted any previously provided dates of birth from our membership records. We do not ask for applicants to indicate their gender, and we do not consider it correct to presume gender from a name.

In March 2024, we commenced an option for three-year memberships. In the eight months since then, 52 members (32% of total membership) have chosen the three-year option. This year 56 people became members for the first time.

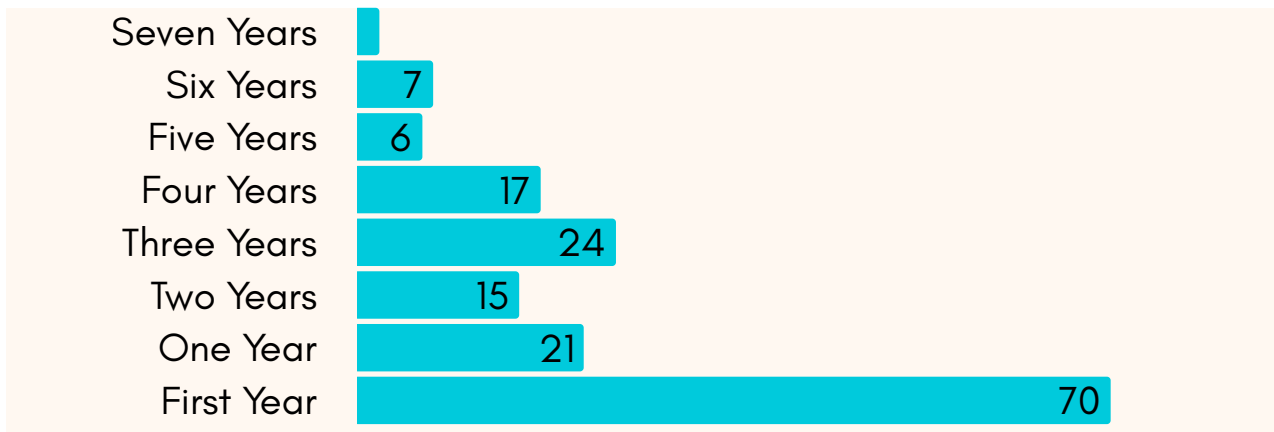
WHO ARE OUR MEMBERS?

We cannot determine an age or gender distribution of members, however from our experience from events would suggest that our active membership is predominantly (though far from exclusively) female, with a broad spread of ages.

We can determine two interesting distributions from our membership records, however - length of membership and membership distribution across the region.

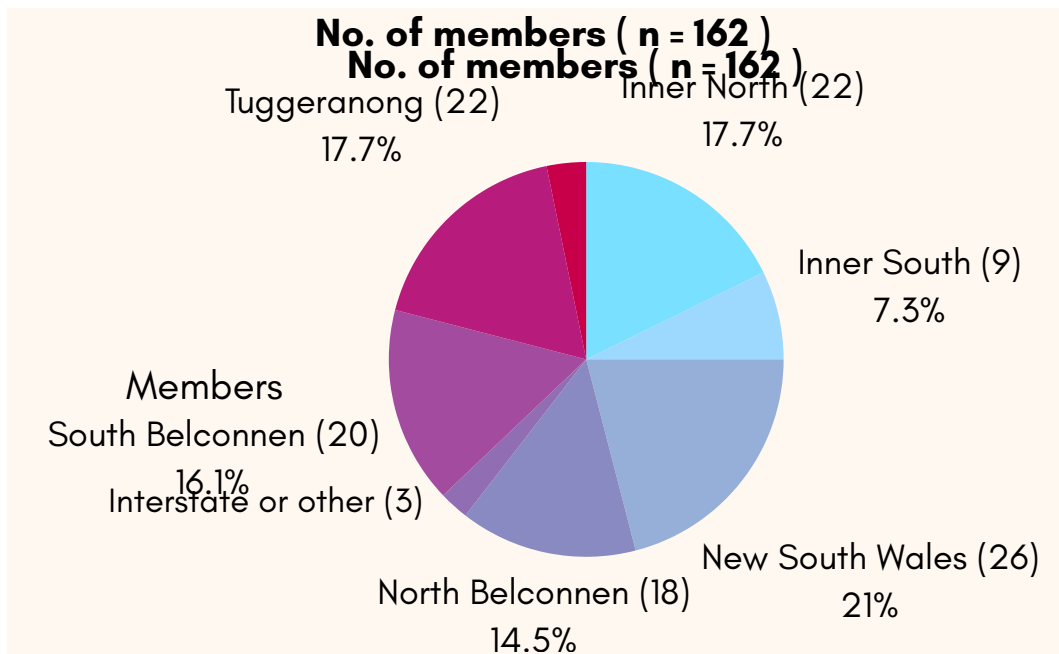
LENGTH OF MEMBERSHIP

Of our 161 members at 1 November 2024:



Distribution of members in the region

This year, we have a more even spread of members across the Capital region than we have had in previous years. Membership by address advised by region is shown on the pie chart below:



HOW DO OUR MEMBERS FIND US

From July 2023, we have included a question on our membership application on how people find CSS. We currently have responses from 36 current members:



This clearly shows that being active and visible in the community remains important for CSS.

MEMBERSHIP TURNOVER

Membership turnover is moderating, but remains high for people joining at 'marquee' events like Seed Swaps. We believe this may relate to our policy of providing immediate value to members on joining in the form of three free packets of seed. This policy aligns strongly with our aims of developing a 'living' seed bank and of returning value to our local community.

- 45 Did not renew at the end of their 1st year
- 9 Did not renew at the end of their 2nd year
- 4 Did not renew at the end of their 3rd year
- 2 Did not renew after 3 or more years



IV. Communications Report

Karina Bontes Forward & Cat Mueller

It has been a very exciting time for the Communications team this year with many new projects, ideas flowing and the seeds of future ventures sprouting! This year saw the expansion of Karina's one-woman Comms team, bringing socials and illustration superstar Cat on board under her mentorship. Cat has an innovative and colourful style that suits CSS well on many fronts, and has been gradually getting more involved and volunteering at events as well as doing comms. The duo have been learning to collaborate effectively as a team, with the aim of creating and refining systems such as file sharing, using templates, and branding guides for the ease of onboarding more volunteers in the future.

Mailing List

The newsletter sent out to the mailing list subscribership has reduced to bi-monthly this year, to allow more to go in and for sustainability in delivery.

The subscriber rate has increased 13% (118 new subscribers), down from 35% (201 new subscribers) last year, taking the total number of subscribers to 1,015. Open rate has stayed at an impressive average of between 35-50%, meaning a steadily rising number of absolute opens as the subscribership has increased, with the most recent newsletter having 405 unique opens.

Website

The new website is under construction and we anticipate completion early in 2025.



Social media

The platforms used are Facebook and Instagram, with Facebook remaining the more active but with a big increase in Instagram usage this year. The main page is the primary outreach tool, and has had a steady rise in followers, with a 17.4% increase of net follows (229 followers) over the last 12 months. This is a decrease since last year, which saw a 29.5% increase (432 new followers). Apart from the main page, Facebook continues to be our core tool for communication in different groups, notably the main CSS group, which has increased membership and activity significantly. Women unsurprisingly make up 81.6% of our following, with men making up 18.4%.

The Instagram account currently has 782 followers, up a massive 37.5% this year with 213 new followers.



Canberra Seed Savers

1.9K likes • 2.3K followers

We work cooperatively to protect our heritage of open-pollinated seeds and grow a locally-adapted Living Seed Bank to share with our community. We aim to educate and inspire more seed savers 🌱

canberraseedsavers ▾ ● 📷 + ☰

 117 posts 778 followers 380 following

Canberra Seed Savers Coop
Growing, saving and sharing locally grown seed to build a living seed bank on Ngunnawal/Ngambri land 🌱
linktr.ee/canberraseedsavers



Group by Canberra Seed Savers

Canberra Seed Savers Co-op >

🔒 Private group · 575 members



Group by Canberra Seed Savers

Seed Guardians Program | Canberra Seed Savers >

🔒 Private group · 21 members



Group by Canberra Seed Savers

Dwarf Tomato Project - Canberra Seed Savers >

🔒 Private group · 59 members



Group by Canberra Seed Savers

CSSC Native Seed Saving Working Group >

🔒 Private group · 42 members

Illustrations

Trained at the ANU School of Art, Cat is an incredible visual artist, and has been combining her enthusiasm for plants and seed saving with these skills to create a library of illustrations for use by CSS – including some of those in this report! We love your art Cat, thanks for sharing your skills and creations so generously.

Resources

We are excited to expand and polish our seedy resources to be launched with our revamped website.

These will strengthen our mission of providing/sharing accessible and exciting education on the joy and importance of seed saving. These will be clear, consistent, (and cute!) bite-sized guides on various seed topics – growing from seed, seed saving, hand pollination etc. Initial samples have been handed out at workshops (particularly for the Seed Guardians Program) and markets during the second half of 2024. Our guides follow a consistent visual format – including Cat’s illustrations – making them instantly recognisable and unique to Canberra Seed Savers. The finalised resources will be available on our new website.

The team is very invigorated with many dialogues occurring with members from across other CSS operational teams, with the seeds of many projects germinating for the upcoming year. We look forward to the year to come!





V. Programs

Programs form the core of CSS work and retain the biggest part of our volunteer base. This year heralds the launch of the Seed Guardians Program, a flagship initiative to support our Living Seed Bank into the future. We also have another new program in the works looking at collecting local seedy stories - watch this space!

Dwarf Tomato Project Johann Sheehan & Thea O'Loughlin

dwarftomatoproject@canberraseedsavers.org.au

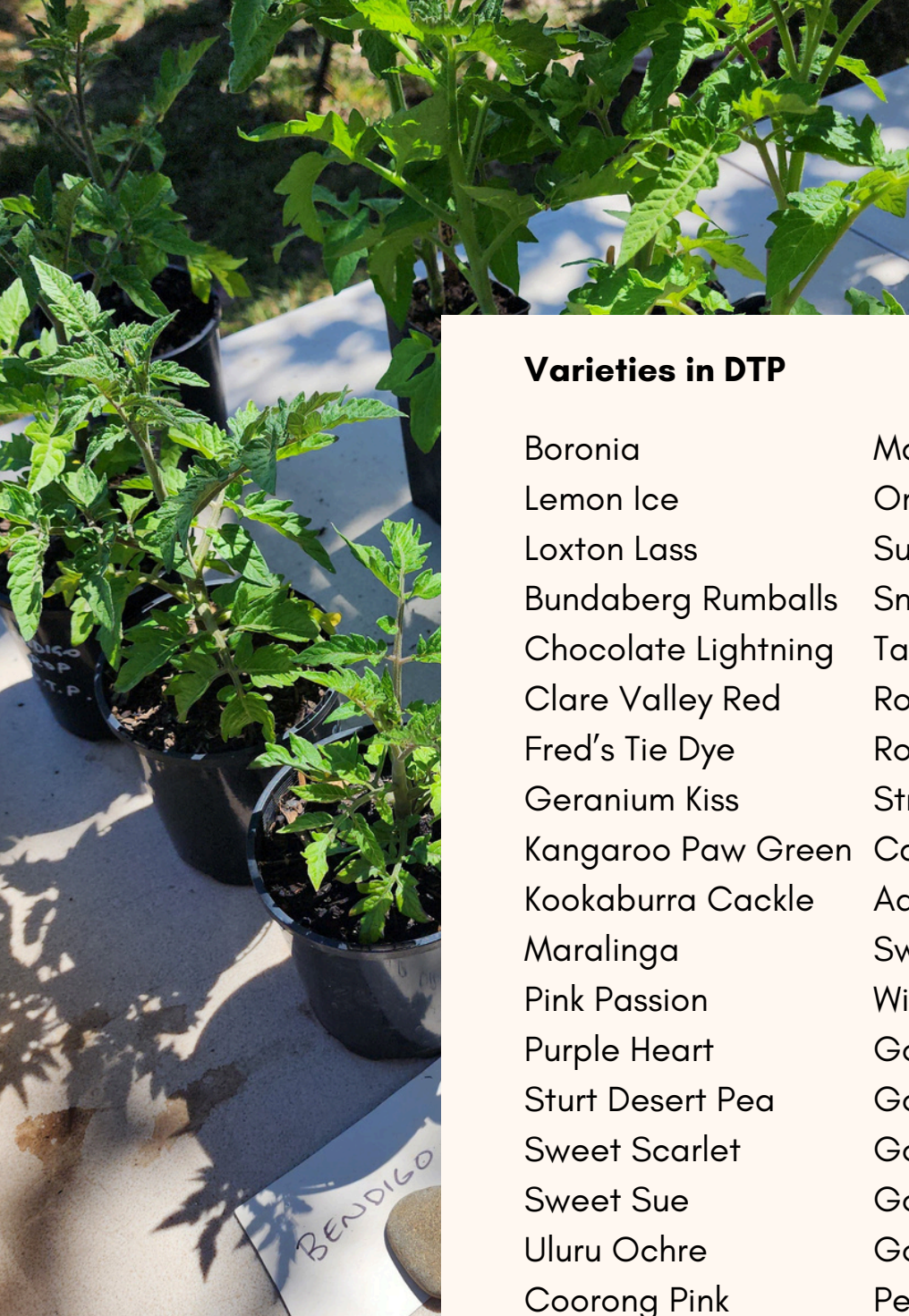
The Dwarf Tomato Project has gone from strength to strength this year, finishing one season and starting another with an increasing number of growers and the majority of varieties now classified as secure (200 seeds in the Seed Bank).

2023-24 Season

The 2023-24 season finished strongly, with 16 growers donating approximately 2,400 seeds back to the bank - a mammoth effort! As a result 31 of the 37 varieties are now classified as secure. Patrina generously gifted additional varieties to the bank for this season, for which we are very grateful!

One of the highlights of our year is our DTP tasting session. For the 2023-24 season final, we enjoyed a spectacular array of colours from pale yellow, orange, red to deep burgundy.





Varieties in DTP

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Boronia | Mallee Rose |
| Lemon Ice | Orange Cream |
| Loxton Lass | Summertime Gold |
| Bundaberg Rumballs | Sneaky Sauce |
| Chocolate Lightning | Tasmanian Chocolate |
| Clare Valley Red | Rosella Crimson |
| Fred's Tie Dye | Rosella Purple |
| Geranium Kiss | Striped Antho |
| Kangaroo Paw Green | Catydid Little Red Riding Hood |
| Kookaburra Cackle | Adelaide Festival |
| Maralinga | Sweet Adelaide |
| Pink Passion | Wilpena |
| Purple Heart | Gondwana Lighting |
| Sturt Desert Pea | Gondwana Thunder |
| Sweet Scarlet | Gondwana Rose |
| Sweet Sue | Gondwana Moon |
| Uluru Ochre | Gondwana Lava |
| Coorong Pink | Pepper Like Strike |
| Blazing Beauty | |



The top ranking tomatoes for 2023-24 were:

1. Uluru Ochre
2. Adelaide Festival
3. Fred Tie Dye
4. Tasmania Chocolate
5. Sweet Sue

2024-25 Season

We have really hit the soil growing in the 2024-25 season. We are thrilled to have Cath, one of our very experienced growers, join the team this season. In July, 16 germinators collected their precious seeds at the Dairy Road Winter Market, and have diligently tended their babies to maturity, despite challenges of pests, frost, inquisitive kittens and other challenges. They have produced over 220 seedlings across 40 varieties.

Participants gathered for our annual seedling swap on 27 October with 19 keen growers collecting seedlings. We are particularly grateful to Tamsin for donating additional varieties to the program this season!

Continuing Joh and Thea's geeky stats obsession, here is a summary of DTP fun facts for the season to date!

Seeds distributed	356
Germinators	17
Varieties	40
Seedlings grown	222
Seedlings adopted out	228
Growers	39



Going to the Source

Patrina Nuske-Small is a south coast local and the original breeder of dwarf tomatoes in Australia – our guru! After last year’s AGM, DTP growers gathered on Zoom for a very special seminar from the Patrina, who briefed us on the origin of, growing habits, taste, and naming of her dwarf tomato varieties. She even dipped into instructions on how to hand pollinate and breed them which got us all excited!

We also got to sit with Patrina at the 2023–24 tasting session, where she imparted more of her tomato knowledge and gave us another array of seeds to try in 2024.

The DTP is also exciting because it is part of the Open Source Seed Initiative (OSSI). At CSS, we're passionate believers in the right of all people to have free access to food seeds to grow and save and share. This is seed sovereignty, and we believe it's at the heart of food sovereignty, the idea that all people should have control over their food supply.

Most of the world's seeds are now owned by corporations. Seeds are disappearing as major chemical companies buy out smaller seed companies and then promote their own genetically modified seeds with their accompanying chemicals.

OSSI seeks to protect a wide range of newly-bred varieties from being targeted by these companies, and it does so by applying Open Source designations to varieties that have been pledged by their breeders. These seeds are publicly listed at the OSSI site so there can be no confusion as to their status – they are pledged to be free from any restrictions, cannot be patented, can be used for further breeding and selection by anyone who wishes to do so. They are protected with the OSSI pledge.

www.osseeds.org

The OSSI Pledge

'You have the freedom to use these OSSI-Pledged seeds in any way you choose. In return, you pledge not to restrict others' use of these seeds or their derivatives by patents or other means, and to include this Pledge with any transfer of these seeds or their derivatives.'



Community Seedlings Program

Rosemary Castle

communityseedlingprogram@canberraseedsavers.org.au

2023

Our Spring Community Seedling Program wound up just before Christmas with a final delivery to Companion House. Following a small trial several years ago, Companion House's clients now love our food seedlings so much we hardly get in the door before eager hands are reaching for them!

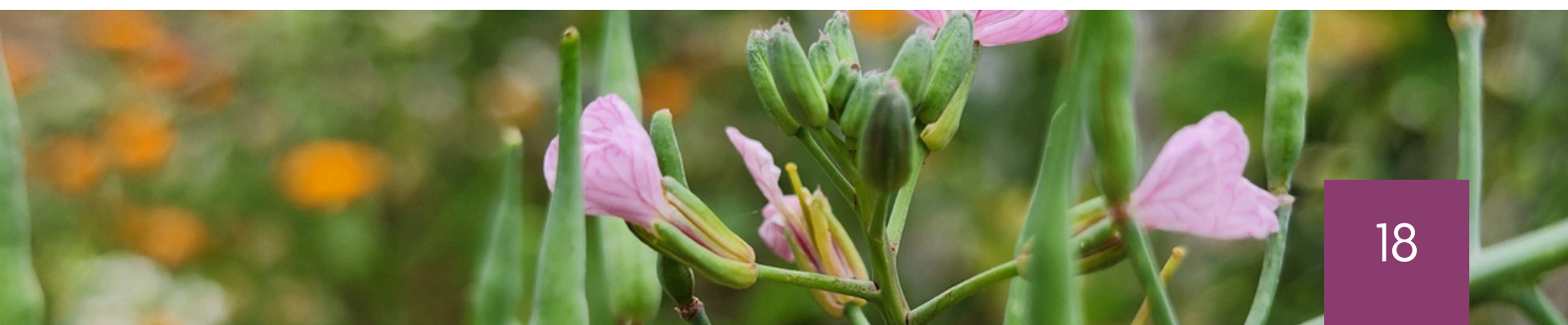
Overall in Spring 2023, 18 enthusiastic volunteers grew 2000 seedlings at home for 18 community organisations. A highlight was donating seedlings to St Benedict's in Queanbeyan for the first time.

As the Spring program had always been more popular than the Autumn, we decided to focus solely on the Spring program from 2024.

2024

By September, many former and some new volunteers were already growing and producing a wondrous array of seedlings for our program. To date, 25 active growers have produced more than 1400 seedlings for our 13 organisations. We are particularly pleased to be working with additional food pantries: Mustard Seed and the University of Canberra food pantries in the north and Lanyon Food Hub in the south.

In another first, Community Services #1 volunteers are trialling using our seeds to grow food seedlings for their own clients. We are also planning to offer seed saving and other workshops for organisations which participate in our program, which is a great way to keep capacity-building in the community!



We aim to support our organisations in their work as best we can and regularly receive positive feedback. We especially enjoyed this from one of the mental health rehabilitation services: 'It's as if Santa has come early this year'. Kudos and big thanks to our generous and committed volunteers who make this program work so well.

Community Services #1 pantry, Narrabundah

Tucker Box pantry, Hackett

Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services,

Companion House, Assisting Survivors of Torture and Trauma

Woden School, Deakin

Galilee School, Kambah, *for children with mild intellectual disabilities*

GROW, Narrabundah, *residential rehabilitation for people with mental ill health*

Canberra Recovery Services, Salvation Army, *residence for people with addictions*

Communities@Work, Tuggeranong & Gungahlin pantries

St Benedict's Community Centre, Queanbeyan

Arawang Emergency Relief Hub, Anglicare, Kambah

Gordon Community Centre pantry, Anglicare

Mustard Seed Uniting Food Pantry, Gungahlin

University of Canberra Food Pantry, Belconnen

Lanyon Food Hub, YWCA Canberra Mura Lanyon Youth & Community Centre

Once again, we offer a heartfelt thank you to Powells' Stockfeeds and Martin's Fertilizers for their kind sponsorship, without which the program could not run.





Seed Guardians Program

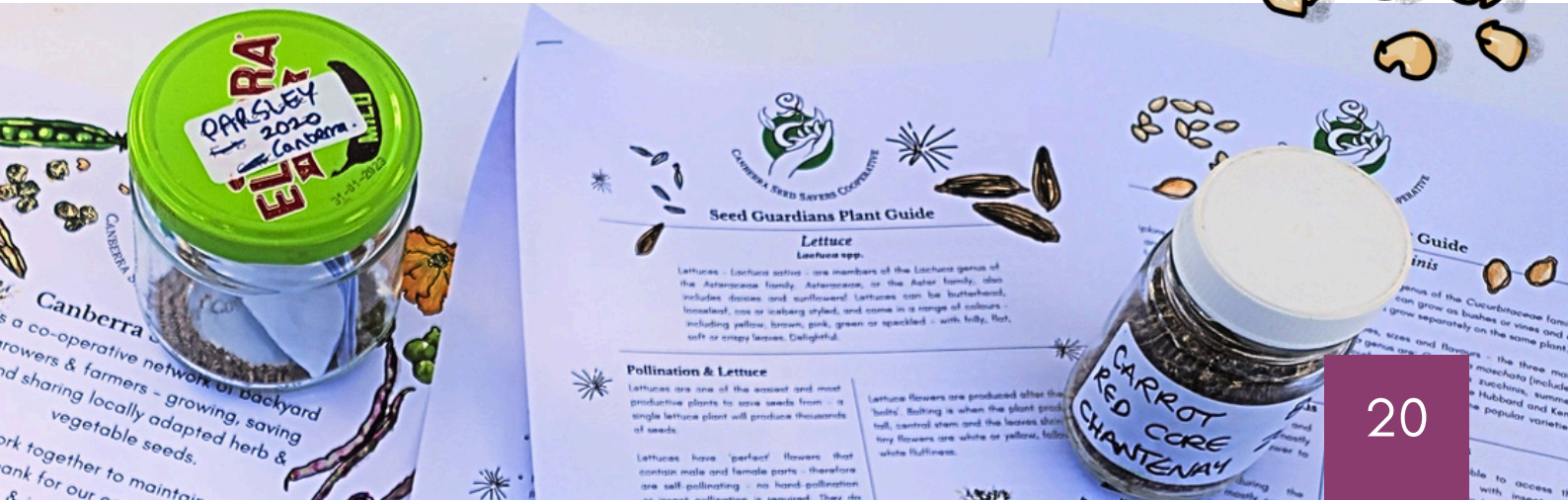
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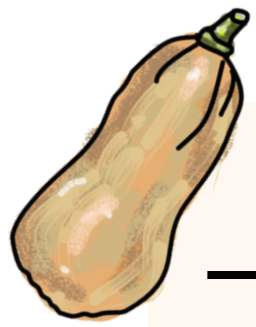
In spring 2024 CSS began trialling a structured, community-based seed saving program to produce true-to-type seed in bulk quantities for the Living Seed Bank. This is to support our vision of achieving 100% local seed. Seed Guardians volunteers grow and save high-demand varieties of popular vegetable, herb and flower seeds that will supplement and strengthen the resilience, diversity and richness of the Living Seed Bank.

For the pilot program, we had 30 initial signups and currently have 18 active volunteers growing 1-3 varieties each. There are 18 seed varieties of 7 different types of vegetable being grown. Volunteers are keeping records in a shared spreadsheet to ensure robust and true-to-type seed.

Volunteers are provided with seeds, seedling raising mix, educational material and online support via a Facebook group. There are a wide range of skills within the cohort, with beginners to experienced growers. The Program will hold three key in-person events through the growing season to build capacity and connection. The first of these, on growing from seed for seed saving, was held in September and was a lovely, well-attended event!

Data from the pilot will be assessed at the end of the season to inform the program's design. It's on track to become a core pillar of CSS that supports our ethos and sustainability into the future. Watch this space in next year's report to see what happens!





Plant List
Seed Guardians Program - 2023 Trial:

Eggplant

Genus: *Solanum*
 Species: *Solanum melongena*
 Varieties: Black Beauty,
 Listada di Gandia, Early Long
 Purple

Zucchini

Genus: *Cucurbita*
 Species: *Cucurbita pepo*
 Varieties: Black Beauty,
 Golden

Lettuce

Genus: *Lactuca*
 Species: *Lactuca sativa*
 Varieties: Cos, Australian
 Yellow Leaf, Freckles, Iceberg

Pumpkin

Genus: *Cucurbita*
 Species: *Cucurbita moschata*
 & *Cucurbita maxima*
 Varieties: Kent, Golden
 Nugget, Butternut

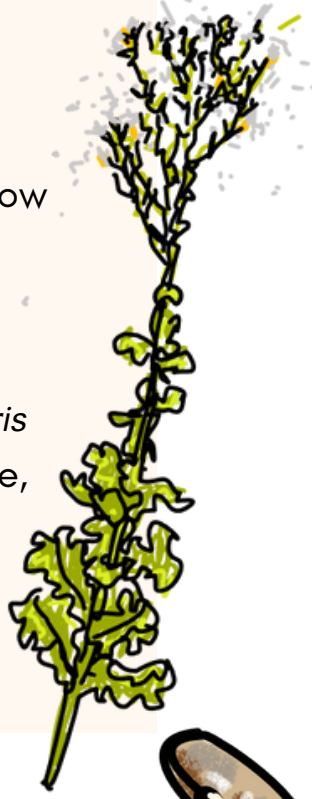


Cucumber

Genus: *Cucumis*
 Species: *Cucumis sativus*
 Varieties: Richmond River
 Green Apple, Green Muncher
 Burpless

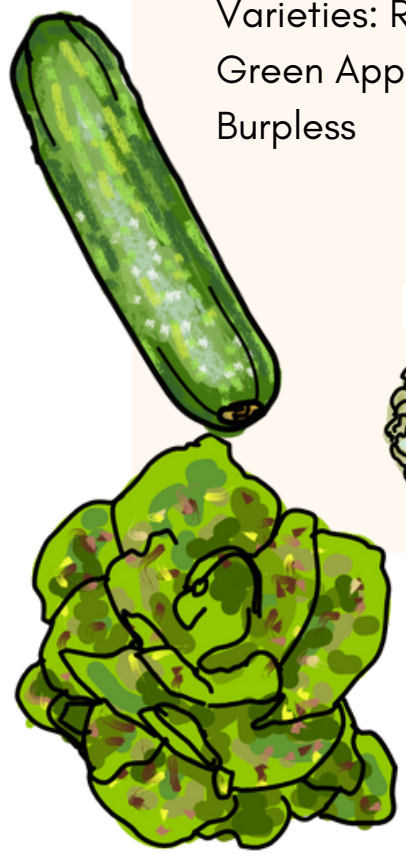
Dwarf Peas

Genus: *Fabaceae*
 Species: *Pisum sativum*
 Varieties: Sugar Snap, Snow



Dwarf Beans

Genus: *Phaseolus*
 Species: *Phaseolus vulgaris*
 Varieties: Dragon's Tongue,
 Royal Burgundy





VI. Working Groups

Seed Bank Working Group

Johann Sheehan on behalf of the Seed Bank Working Group

seedbank@canberraseedsavers.org.au

The Seed Bank Working Group - comprising Cath, Joh, Natalie, Virginia, Susan, Gina & Michelle - have had a wonderful time packing a range of seeds for market boxes, cafes and various other collection points. We usually meet on Tuesdays at CCF and have an often humorous, seedy time packing while chatting over coffee and tasty treats. Our duties entail a range of tasks from helping prepare for seed swaps, stocking market boxes, responding to requests for seed and general support of CSS operations, though our primary task is packing seeds for distribution.

Packing donations

Since all seed is donated, sorting donations is an integral part of the seed bank tasking. We have two options with donated seed:

- Unclean seed: Goes to a Seedy Session to be a teaching tool
- Clean seed: Goes into the Seed Bank for distribution

We have packed thousands of seeds this year! We love receiving donations of new and interesting seed, some standouts this year include red broad bean seeds and jars and jars of coriander and parsnip seeds donated by our beloved Cath. We also take some miscellaneous seeds home to grow to try and work out what exactly they are.



Accommodation

Since spring 2023 the Seed Bank has been housed at the Canberra City Farm, in the Southern Harvest Association storage area. This partnership with SHA has sprouted a real consolidation in our organisation of the seed bank, which is improving all the time. We hold our working bees in the CCF LESS Building, and we find these new digs incredibly comfortable in beautiful surroundings. We also have a new storage cabinet which keeps all our important resources in one place.



Embracing role sharing

We have a great routine where everyone does the jobs they like to do best. One person looks after sorting and restocking the market boxes, one creates labels, another cuts up labels while another sticks labels on envelopes and dates them. Our vision impaired lady fills the packets and is a font of knowledge about seeds. People of all abilities are welcome as long as you love seeds. Even the guide dog is responsible for cleaning the floor of crumbs!



Impressive seed bank stats

A fun fact that we are very proud of: Almost all of the seed in the library is locally grown and donated by members. This is invaluable as locally adapted seeds contribute to food sovereignty and adapt to changes in our local climate!



Tomato brown rugose virus

In light of the tomato brown rugose virus arriving in Australia, we are being particularly vigilant about our biosecurity practices. The virus deforms and discolours fruit and affects the leaves of plants, and is easily spread through seeds, plants and people touching plants. The team will be taking steps to ensure that tomato seed donated this season is quarantined and will adapt our policies and practices as news of this nasty virus develops.





Native Seed Working Group

Thea O'Loughlin

nativeseeds@canberraseedsavers.org.au

After lying dormant for a few months, the Native Seed Working Group has regenerated itself! In early spring we welcomed two new co-ordinators, Jeanette and Michael, who have come onboard to help coordinator Thea keep things going. The group is hoping to run 3 events a year.

The year started off in autumn when we hosted a free relaxed session focussed on hands-on native plant germination and propagation at the Canberra City Farm. About 20 attendees practiced techniques for growing natives from seed (native grasses and paper daisy), striking native cuttings (banksia and river mint), and also splitting established plants and re-planting to create many (bulbine lily). Everyone took many plants and potted seeds home on the day!

In spring, a dozen native enthusiasts registered for our native plant wander at Budjan Galindji Grassland Reserve in Franklin. Local botanist, Emily Sutcliffe, hosted to teach the group how to identify the grassland plants, spot ripe seed, and also look out for pesky weed species. This was a great chance to utilise the small native focused library which the working group has been steadily growing for use at events.

Our licence to collect seed on native land has lapsed, and we are exploring renewing this in the new year.





VII. Workshops & Events

Arian McVeigh

events@canberraseedsavers.org.au

It's been another busy year for CSS with lots of opportunities to connect with Canberrans and to share the joy and inspiration of seed saving! For more about events associated with the various programs, please check out those reports.

Seed Swaps

This year's Seed Swaps were held at the Canberra City Farm and were both fabulous fun, including woodfired pizza and musical entertainment from our wandering minstrel, Dave. The core organising team now has the Seed Swap event plan and execution perfected. Lots of seeds come in and go out, and we are always happy to see seeds getting taken from the 'free seed' stash, a place to try your luck!

At the Spring Seed Swap, we had 50 attend, signed up 14 new members, made 30 pizzas and had LOTS of seed swapped, all run by 13 amazing volunteers.

This year both Seed Swaps were well attended, with more seed donated than taken (this is how it usually happens!). It proves the point that seed saving creates an incredible abundance and that sharing is a powerful way to build our seed sovereignty and security.



Workshops

This year we have changed our educational workshops a little by reducing our Introduction to Seed Saving from 2 hours to 1 hour. This helps people to find out if they are interested without being too content-heavy.

We will be adding a new in-depth workshop, How to Save Seeds (Herbs, Veggies and Flowers) in early 2025 and a Pollination for Seed Growing and Saving before the end of 2024. Our Growing Herbs and Veggies from Seed was heaps of fun with lots of tips and local wisdom shared in the group.

Market Stalls

2024 was another year of fabulous local festivals and markets and the highlights were so many it's hard to know where to start! Our old favourites include the Bungendore Harvest Festival and the Kambah COGS Open Day, which always draw an enthusiastic group of volunteers. It's really rewarding to be part of our community and to celebrate local food and gardening. Pearce Community Markets and the Canberra City Farm Open Day are regular features in our calendar and always result in more keen beans joining up, broadening our network and building our capacity to create a thriving local food community based on a sustainable seed system.

Thank you so much to all the fantastic volunteers who made our events such a success this year - we couldn't do it without you!





CSS Events

- Regular Seedy Sessions / Members Meeting
- Super Seedy Saturday
- Dwarf Tomato Project
 - End of Season Tasting
 - Seedling Swap
- Autumn Seed Swap
- Spring Seed Swap
- Seed Guardians Program Launch



CSS Workshops

- Intro to Seed Saving x2
- Growing Natives: Sowing, Striking and Splitting
- Growing from Seed



Markets & Other Events

- COGS Dickson Open Day
- Tuggeranong Festival
- Canberra City Farm Open Day
- Lanyon Homestead Harvest Day Out
- Southern Harvest Association
Bungendore Harvest Festival
- Dairy Road Winter Markets
- Sly Fox Market
- Community Gardens Australia
Gathering
- Pearce Markets x3
- COGS Kambah Open Day
- Saving Summer Seeds @ Ainslie
Church of Christ
- Little Greenies with ACT Libraries x2
- Natives identification walk x2





VIII. Seed Distribution & Sales

Karina Bontes Forward & Catherine Radisich

Seed Distribution Outlets

- Giles Street Kitchen (Kingston)
- The Food Co-operative Shop (Acton)
- Canberra City Farm Less Building (Fyshwick)
- Michelago General Store (Michelago)
- Stromlo Lil' Street Library (Wright)
- Southern Harvest Association Community Store (Bungendore)



It's been another great year of distributing seeds through our honesty boxes and events, with more local seed reaching the community than ever before! In total, we sold over 2,651 packets of seed, which is pretty incredible. This doesn't include any seed given away, such as to volunteers or on the 'free table' at our Seed Swaps.

Distribution outlets

We have two types of distribution outlets: honesty boxes and shop sales, which provide CSS locally-sourced seed to the community on an on-going basis. We have a (normally wooden) box set up in a shop which is filled with seeds and stewarded by our wonderful volunteers, who keep an eye on stocks and keep the relationship with our box hosts going. Our newest honesty box is at the Canberra City Farm in the LESS Building, check it out next time you're there. We sold over 1071 packets through these outlets this year, and we don't have data from everywhere so it's probably more than that!



Market stalls

Market stalls are a staple of seed sales, and make a great contribution to getting CSS seed out in the community during autumn and spring, particularly to new punters. We sold over 600 packets of seed at markets this year.

Seed Swaps

We hold two big seed swaps throughout the year, with the Spring one being the flagship event in the CSS calendar - very well attended and LOTS of seeds sold! We sold over 500 packets of seed at our Seed Swaps this year.

Membership

There were approximately 160 new memberships and renewals for the financial year period. When members join or renew they receive 3 packets of seeds, meaning a distribution of 480 packets of seeds as part of membership for that period.



Packets Sold

Giles Street Kitchen	285
The Food Co-operative Shop	566
SHA Community Store	220
Market Stalls	600+
Seed Swaps	500+
Membership	480
General seed sales	478

Total **3129+**



IX. Resources & Facilities

Catherine Radisich

Since moving into the Canberra City Farm at the end of 2023, our housing situation has been stable and the relationship prosperous. The Southern Harvest Association have kindly allowed CSS usage of their CFF storage facility in which we store the Living Seed Bank, and we have use of the CCF facilities for our workshops and events. Access to these resources goes a long way in helping keep our operations smooth, as well as giving us a central location to call home.

This year has seen these relationships strengthening, and we have enjoyed being part of CCF events such as the Monthly Mingles, working bees and open days, which are all fantastic collaborations and networking opportunities. We even contributed to the planning phase of CCF's strategic plan! We are also now selling our seeds at CCF and have shared our Dwarf Tomato Project seeds with the CCF growing group.

Thanks so much to CCF and SHA for being the best partner organisations a lil community group could wish for!

The CSSC did not apply for any grants this year. We have applied for many over the past years that have allowed us to do things such as upgrade our digital technology and buy equipment for our facilities like a marquee and fridges. We are well equipped right now, and will seek to expand as the organisation also does in the future



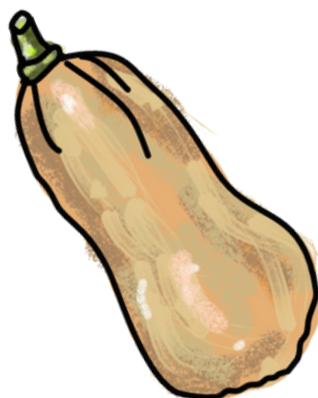
X. Civil Involvement

Arian McVeigh

During 2024 Seed Savers continued to work collaboratively with other local food, agriculture and environment organisations and the ACT Government Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate to develop and finalise the first ever Canberra Region Local Food Strategy.

We know that seeds are the basis of our food system and that locally-grown, community-owned seeds are essential to our food sovereignty. We've advocated for government support for more facilities for community grassroots organisations, including for meetings, storage and educational demonstrations. We've also joined other organisations in calling for government funding and support to develop a local Food Hub. The ACT Food Hub would include food processing, storage and distribution facilities as well as education and training programs. This would in turn build our community capacity to produce food which is good for us, locally grown and equitably produced.

We've lobbied for a truly local online platform which brings together the knowledge and resources of the local food community so they can be accessed by all Canberrans. We want to create a local portal to promote organisations like CSS and connect them with each other and with Canberrans who are new to growing food. The outcome of the consultations and discussions is the Canberra Region Local Food Strategy, 2024 -2029.



Canberra Region Local Food Strategy 2024 -2029.

The Strategy was released on 12 June 2024 and establishes a robust food and agriculture policy for the ACT, and specifically recognises:

- the value of the ACT and region’s food production sector, and
- the people working across these supply chains.

The Strategy aims to increase the capacity of the local food system to improve access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. It also provides incentives and economic opportunities, including job creation and supporting strong community participation and inclusion.

We look forward to continuing to work with ACT Government and our community to ensure the implementation of the strategy.



XI. Being part of seed savers

There are many ways to be part of and contribute to the Canberra Seed Savers Co-operative. You don't have to be an experienced grower to join or volunteer, and we have people helping out on all kinds of jobs such as running workshops, growing seedlings, web design, making pizzas, writing stories, and processing and donating seeds. There are multiple programs and groups you can choose from, and you choose how much time you contribute.

You can also just join and enjoy the perks! Benefits of membership include access to beautiful locally-grown seed (3 free packets per year with your membership as a start), free workshops, a say in CSS affairs and the right to vote at the AGM, and of course be part of a thriving local seed-loving community!

Join or renew your membership of Canberra Seed Savers Cooperative via the website:

<https://canberraseedsavers.org.au/join-the-cooperative/>

Membership is for either one or three years, and your membership will be valid for the length you choose from the end of the month you join.

Membership fees

1 year: Waged \$10 | Unwaged/student \$5

3 year: Waged \$30 | Unwaged/student \$15

Once your membership application is received, we'll send you bank account details for direct deposit. Membership applications will be considered by the Cooperative Board and new members will receive a welcome email including your membership number.

