



Annual Report

November 2021-October 2022



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.

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I. DIRECTORS' REPORT

As a not-for-profit cooperative and network of backyard growers, Canberra Seed Savers is powered entirely by the passion and dedication of volunteers. The Board has been inspired this year by the number of members who have generously given their time, skills and community spirit to help grow our living seed bank, educate and support more Canberrans to save seeds, and ensure the success of our projects. Whether it was playing a crucial role in our huge Spring Seed Swap, growing seedlings to donate in the Community Seedlings Program, organising the Living Seed Bank and seed packing, running stalls and workshops, growing and increasing stocks of Dwarf Tomato seeds or helping the Cooperative to run by coordinating programs like the Native Seed Saving Group, running our memberships system, or being part of the Board, more than 45 Canberra Seed Savers members have volunteered during the year, many taking on more than one volunteer role. This amazing collective effort has helped Canberra Seed Savers to grow our cooperative to 175 members as of October 2022. Hundreds more Canberrans are connected in our network through our Facebook group and newsletter distribution. The Board wants to give a huge shout out and thank you to all volunteers. Whether you've been able to contribute a couple of hours or many weeks of your precious time, thank you for being part of the local movement to build a living seed bank and seed saving community.

During this year, we have been grateful for the ongoing support of the Canberra Environment Centre, both in housing our seed bank and providing space for many of our events and workshops. This partnership has been invaluable to assist Canberra Seed Savers to continue our work and to grow.

We have also secured grants from ACT government for Technology Upgrade Fund Grant Program to assist with the Technology for Education Upgrade project and the Community Support and Infrastructure Grant as a contribution towards fridge and vacuum sealer. Both were awarded in April/June 2022. Thanks in particular to the work of Melissa and Rebekah for organising those applications and administering the grants.

As we have grown so much as a cooperative in 2022, with more members and more activities than ever before, we are hoping to share the work of coordinating and organising across our network more in 2023. The Board has been working on ideas for a sustainable organising structure based around a system of volunteer coordinators who will work with the support of the Board and volunteers to deliver our mission of educating and inspiring more Canberrans to save seeds, to help more people grow food at home, and to operate the living seed bank for the benefit of our community.



Arian winnowing seeds

During the year, as Covid restrictions eased, we got together regularly to save and swap seeds at Seedy Saturdays and Seed Swaps and we reached out to teach and inspire many more Canberrans to save seeds through workshops, markets and community events. This year, we were able to get back into running workshops in person and our volunteer workshop facilitators and helpers had a great time running fun and educational sessions at Floriade, the Canberra City Farm, Tuggeranong Library, Michelago and the Canberra Environment Centre. Workshop topics included Native Seed Sowing and Striking, Introduction to Seed Saving and Making Seed Bombs. We had fun running stalls at many community festivals and markets. Check out the Workshops and Events Reports for more details.

The increase in membership, shown in the Memberships Report prepared by our dedicated and hardworking Membership Coordinator, Nick, reflects the increasing interest in growing food at home, seed saving, accessing locally grown seeds, and being involved in the Coop's projects and programs. The Financial Report, prepared by our amazing Treasurer, Rebekah, shows that the financial position of the Cooperative is secure, and the Cooperative is able to meet all its costs, based in this year mostly on seed sales, some targeted grants from ACT Government, membership subscriptions, revenue from workshops and events including those run through Floriade and the Canberra Environment Centre, and surplus from previous years. The Board has considered the financial reports and can advise members that the Cooperative is solvent.

It's been really encouraging to see that more and more Canberrans are growing food plants from seed, and saving and sharing seeds. The generosity of contributions to the living seed bank, including from Canberra Organic Society gardens like Charnwood and Erindale, as well as many, many contributions from backyard growers throughout the network, means that we have a good stock of seeds to distribute whether through sales for fundraising or through seed swaps. It's been another bumper year of seediness and we're looking forward to an exciting 2023 and expanding our community engagement and education programs to continue our work to make seed sovereignty and security a reality for Canberrans.

In 2022 the Canberra Seed Savers Cooperative Board members were Arian McVeigh, Thea O'Loughlin, Melissa Fellowes, Karina Bontes Forward, Rebekah Gupte, Sarah Ayrton and Chrissie Atkinson. Board members spent many hours working collaboratively on governance, administration and organisation of the Cooperative. All board members also play an active role in one or more aspects of the cooperatives' projects and activities.

Our monthly newsletter has been a crucial part of the success of Canberra Seed Savers in 2022, helping our network to stay up to date with the many Canberra Seed Savers activities, to hear about the inspiring work of volunteers, to learn more about our projects and how they can be part of the fun, and to be inspired to grow and save and share seeds. Thanks to our amazing newsletter editor Karina who has designed and delivered such an engaging and exciting newsletter every month (sometimes from overseas!) and congratulations on the great feedback we continue to get from readers!

Particular appreciation and admiration to Rosemary and Minde who have organised and coordinated the massive 2022 Community Seedlings Programs, working with a large group of dedicated volunteers, growers and deliverers and many local organisations; and to Nick who has tirelessly worked behind the scenes as memberships coordinator to organise and maintain our membership database and give a warm and informative welcome to new members.

One of the many exciting initiatives from Canberra Seed Savers members this year has been the establishment of a local seed saving group based in Michelago. Michelago group members are part of the Canberra Seed Savers Cooperative and beginning in Winter 2022, have had a flying start, participating in Growing From Seed and Introduction to Seed Saving workshops, having regular monthly get togethers to swap seeds, share knowledge and build community connections and even selling some seeds to raise funds through the Michelago Store. Congratulations to the dynamic and passionate Belinda who is the organiser and driving force behind the development and running of the Michelago group and a warm welcome to all Michelago group members. We look forward to sharing the seedy journey with you!

Our Native Seed Saving Working Group has continued to grow this year, securing another collection permit and holding a get together and a workshop. More events are being planned for coming months by Thea and Sarah who have put in a lot of work to establish and organise this group and to build an active and informative Facebook group.

A vitally important part of Canberra Seed Savers' work is getting seeds out into the community. This year has seen the establishment of a new, neighbourhood-based street seed library at the Stromlo Lil Street Library. This is a really exciting opportunity for Canberra Seed Savers to explore the possibilities of more street seed libraries in the future. Thanks to Sarah who organised for Canberra Seed Savers to be part of this initiative. As in previous years, we have been delighted and overwhelmed by the enthusiastic participation of Canberra Organic Growers Society gardens in seed swapping, including Erindale, Kambah and Charnwood. Many markets and community festivals provided another opportunity to both distribute seeds and connect with the Canberra community. Check out the Events report for more details.

All of this work can't happen without a well organised seed library and Joh, Cath, Natalie and Jeanette have formed a core Tuesday working group which has been meeting every week since winter to bring the library into order and to facilitate packing of seeds for distribution. This group has contributed many hours to bring organisation and order to the Seed Bank, to prepare Seed Packing Kits for our wonderful home-based seed packing volunteers and to create a fun and social regular working bee.



Photo description



Autumn Seed Swap

In February, a small group of volunteers prepared a submission to the ACT Government Food and Fibre Strategy Discussion Paper. Our submission advocates strongly for the inclusion of a local seed economy as part of the local food economy and highlights the issues of seed insecurity as a risk to food security for all Canberrans.

Canberra Seed Savers has also been part of developing and coordinating the establishment of a national seed savers forum which includes an online forum and seed saving guide and quarterly zoom meetings to connect seed savers and share knowledge and experiences. Participation in the forum, zoom meetings and contributions to the online seed saving guide is open to all.

To find out more about what Canberra Seed Savers has been up to this year, including the development of our Native Seed Saving Group coordinated by Thea O'Loughlin and Sarah Ayrton, reports from the Project Coordinators as well as our Activities Report, read on and please enjoy the fantastic photos of all the fun we had this year!

Thank you to all of the active members of Canberra Seed Savers for your generous contributions, of seeds, knowledge and community spirit and for continuing to be a crucial part of the work of Canberra Seed Savers.

Many thanks to Chrissie who has collated and prepared this Annual Report with contributions from many volunteers.



II. TREASURER'S REPORT

REBEKAH GUPTA

Our income for the year was \$3929.55. This was made up of seed sales of \$2703.75 from various avenues (the Food Coop and Local Press, seed swaps, markets etc.), membership fees (\$920) and the rest (\$300) from workshops and fundraising events and bank interest (\$5.80).

We also received money for two separate grants, \$700 from the ACT Govt. Community Support and Infrastructure Grant for the purchase of a refrigerator and vacuum sealer, and \$3220 from the ACT Govt. Technology Upgrade Grant for the purchase of IT equipment. Both grants were received at the end of the financial year and will be expended in the following year.

Our expenses for the year totaled \$2216.60, including \$1027.06 for the community seedling programme, leaving our profit for the year at \$1712.95.

A copy of the profit and loss statement makes up part of this report.

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. Indeed, in the past two years we have given away more seed than ever, through the Community Seed Growing projects and sharing seeds with our members. A byproduct of this has been more people wanting to be involved with CSSC, meaning more income through seed sales, workshops and memberships.

Our current balance as at 29 October 2022 was \$3017.23. This is a comfortable position for us to be in, and gives us enough of a buffer to meet our financial obligations for the next while, and also be able to invest in new projects that can further expand our reach into the community to support more people to learn the benefits of growing and saving seeds.



Arian and Chrissie at the O'Connor COGS Open Day, 23 Apr 2022

Canberra Seed Savers Financial Report July 2021 - June 2022

Income

Seed Sales	\$2703.75
Workshop income	\$200.00
Membership income	\$920.00
Other income	\$100.00
Interest	\$5.80

Total income **\$3929.55**

Grant income \$3920.00

Total income incl grant **\$7843.75**

Expenditure

General expenditure

Seed Supplies/Stationery	\$630.35
Seeds	\$52.36
Market Stalls	\$35.00
Printing	\$99.69
Internet	\$346.90
Event costs	\$23.26
Bank costs	\$1.98
Total General Expenditure	\$1189.54

Programme Expenditure

Community Seedlings \$1027.06

Total Expenditure **\$2216.60**

Profit/Loss (not incl grant) **\$1712.95**

Bank Balance at 30 June 2022 **\$8135.02**

Actual balance (not incl grant money) **\$4215.02**

III. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

NICK STANIFORTH

The 2021/22 financial year saw further steady growth in membership. Starting with 98 members at 1 July 2021, membership increased to 120 at 30 June 2022. This is a net increase of 22 members.

NEW MEMBERS

To become a member of the Canberra Seed Savers Co-operative, a person completes an application via a Google 'pro forma', pays a membership fee as required by the legislation, and is then considered/ approved by the Board at regular meetings or 'out of session'. All Board members 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 has not had cause to cancel any membership.

During the 2021/22 financial year, 105 membership applications were received via the Google 'pro forma', of which three were duplicate applications. In addition, two people had applied to become members just before 30 June 2022, and were accepted as members by the Board after 1 July 2022.



Richard and his 1974 beans

WHO ARE OUR MEMBERS ?

The 'pro-forma' membership application asks people applying for membership to indicate an email address, phone number, a physical address and a date of birth. We do not ask for applicants to indicate their gender, and we do not consider it correct to presume gender from a name.

Email addresses and phone numbers allow us to contact members.

Email address and date of birth are useful in identifying members who may have similar names - though, to date, this has not been a problem. Many applicants provide an incomplete date of birth.

Given these factors, it is not useful to determine an age or gender distribution of members from information supplied. Our experience from events, however, 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.



Volunteers Wendy and Dorris at the Spring Seed Swap

Length of membership

Of our 120 members at 30 June 2022:

- 4 are in their fourth year of membership
- 17 are in their third year of membership
- 26 are in their second year of membership and
- 73 are in their first year of membership

Distribution of members in the region

Regarding where our members are, physical addresses provided indicate we have a broad spread across the Capital region. Our greatest concentration is in north Canberra (33 members), followed by surrounding NSW* (19), south Belconnen (14), Tuggeranong (13), Gungahlin (12), north Belconnen (11), Weston Creek/Molonglo (8), Woden (6), inner south (2) and Norfolk Island (1). One member has chosen not to indicate a physical address.

* The new Michelago group is not yet reflected in these numbers, as this report deals with the 2021/22 financial year, while the Michelago group has become much more active since July.



Seed Savers members at Seedy Saturdays



IV. COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

KARINA BONTES FORWARD

This last year has seen consistent engagement on all communications fronts. There is less dependence on online presence since there have been no lockdowns, but the role that online comms plays in organising and broadcasting is no less important. Facebook continues being the main social media following. The website and Instagram have more input from contributors and are more active spaces. The mailing list has garnered a fairly high readership and continues to be one of the main news channels for members and non-members alike. Content and consistency continue to be improved.

MAILING LIST

The newsletter has remained monthly over the past year, only taking a break over the summer. There has been steady readership and increased subscribership over the period, apart from the last two months which have seen a downturn.

The subscribership is currently at 699, up from 484 at the last AGM. Taking into account 24 unsubscribes/cleaned accounts and the 239 new subscribers, this is a net increase of 44.5%, down from 54.5%* for the 2020-21 period – though there is an increase in absolute numbers (171 new subscribers last year to 239 this year). There continues to be great uptake of the subscription form on the CSS website, which was added mid-2021.

Open rate hovered around a very high 50% for most of the year, but has dropped the past two months to 40%. Even with this drop, this has been a higher average than last year, where the average open was between 35-45%.

Consistency, success stories and many opportunities to be involved have contributed to the success of the newsletter. Most recently a new section has been added to showcase active members of the seed saving community with 'Seed Star of the Month'. This adds to the focus on increased storytelling, a suggestion from last year's AGM. There has also been some increase of seed saving information and education, though this could definitely be more of a focus for the coming year as the things we have shared have been received with interest and good uptake.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The platforms used are Facebook and Instagram, with Facebook still being the more active, though Instagram has definitely increased over the last year also, prior to which it was basically unused.

On Facebook, the main page is the primary outreach tool, and has had a steady rise in followers, with a 29% increase (432 followers) over the last 12 months, a similar percentage to last year*. Facebook has been an invaluable tool for communication in different groups, continuing with the Seedling Growing community and the Native Seed Savers Working Group, but also now with the Dwarf Tomato Project growers.

The CSS Co-op group, a private Facebook group which is for members and active people in the community, has seen huge increases in the last year, both in membership and in activity. At the time of last year's AGM, it had 159 members, and now boasts 424, a whopping 166.5% increase with 265 new members.

The Instagram account has increased up from 455 followers to 569 followers this year, an increase of 25% with 114 new followers, reflecting more regular sharing and engagement on the app.

Generally speaking, socials engagement has been good and there seems to have been more use by board members and others in posting. A more cohesive strategy that coordinates between platforms and reflects all the goings-on in a timely fashion could be useful in the coming year.

WEBSITE

The website has had some work done on it these last months thanks to Arian, and now boasts a calendar with all the events, more information and stories. It still stands as a landing page, a place for the information on CSS which is unchanging, but is less static than previously. The website is an important place for exchange of information, and has much more potential than is being harnessed; part of the Technology Upgrade grant received by the Co-op this year will contribute towards its continued upgrade to reflect this importance.

*Last year's percentage increases were wrongly calculated, the figures shown here are correct.



Screenshot of the Instagram account which has become much more active over the past year

V. PROJECTS

Dwarf Tomato Project

Arian McVeigh on behalf of the Dwarf Tomato Growing Group

The Dwarf Tomato Project is a decade-long collaboration between US and Australian tomato breeders to develop tomato plants that are smaller in size but still grow tomatoes of all shapes, sizes, tastes and colours. In Australia, the project has been run by Patrina who has developed many new varieties with fabulous names, right here on the South Coast of NSW. Varieties include Kookaburra Cackle, Kangaroo Paw Brown (and Green!), Boronia, Sturt Desert Pea and many more. The Gondwana Series has been exclusively developed in Australia. You can find out more about the Dwarf Tomatoes range and the project here: <https://www.dwarftomatoproject.net/>

In Autumn of 2022, Canberra Seed Savers' first season of growing and saving dwarf tomato seeds came to fruition! Despite an extremely challenging year with wet and cool weather and a late start germinating the tomatoes, volunteer growers managed to save seed from a huge range of tomatoes, building our starter seed bank and learning a lot on the way. Varieties the group saved seed from include Pink Passion, Wilpena, Rosella Crimson, Kangaroo Paw Green, Sweet Adelaide and so many more. 8 growers contributed seeds to the growing collection in an amazing feat of perseverance and dedication despite crazy wet weather.

This first season growing and saving effort by a small group of enthusiastic volunteers increased the starting stock by around 800%. This season we are growing a bigger range of tomatoes with some more rare varieties including Loxton Lass included as well as the very special Gondwana series. The Project aims to increase the range of saved seed and the amount of seed stocks so that we can start sustainably sharing seeds across our network in coming years.



Dwarf Tomato Project seedlings



Thea and Natalie swapping dwarf tomato seedlings



Dwarf Tomatoes from Thea's garden ready to save seed

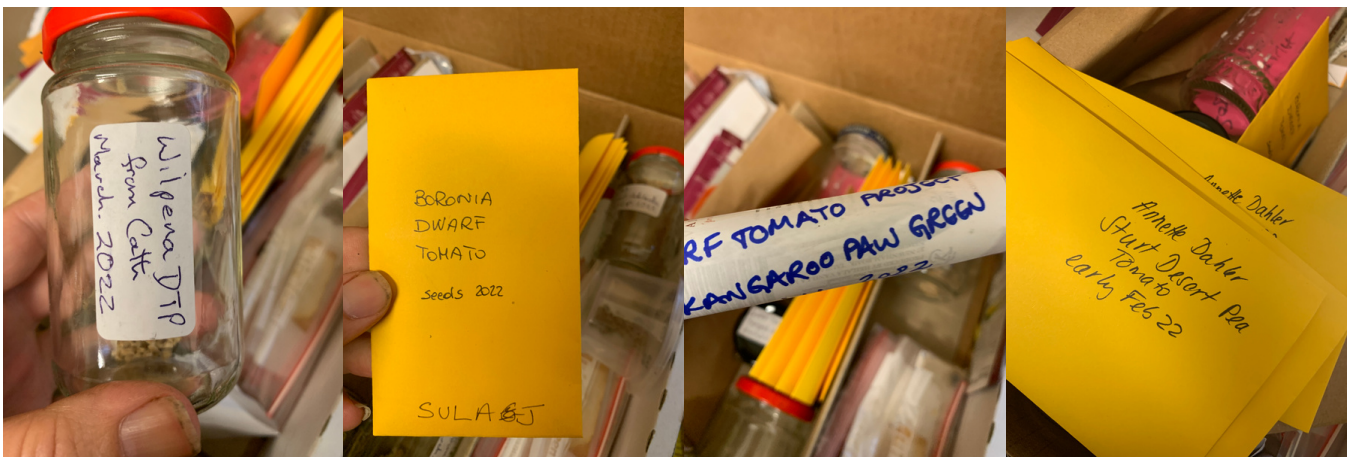


Catch up with Dwarf Tomato breeder, Patrina

A highlight of the 2021-22 season was the opportunity to learn from and meet the breeder of the varieties we grew, Patrina Nuske-Small. Patrina gave the growing group a masterclass in tomato flowers and pollination, identifying the best fruit to save seed from and how dwarf tomatoes grow. Patrina has also donated a range of starting seed stock to the program and generously donated her time for advice and support.

This season, Spring 2022-Autumn 2023, 17 growers have volunteered to be part of the program. A smaller team of very experienced volunteer tomato growers started the program in August by germinating and raising a massive 27 varieties of dwarf tomato seedlings (some with only a couple of plants per variety). Those seedlings are now ready to be distributed to their adopted homes and over the late October and early November period, seedlings will be finding their way into backyards and pots all over Canberra. The aim of the season is simple: grow as healthy and happy a tomato plant as you can, carefully select the best fruit to save seed from, save and contribute that seed back to the seed bank. Of course, there will be tomato eating along the way and we are planning to have a tomato tasting session and a passata making session in Autumn 2023.

During the season, the growing group is linked through a Facebook group to share photos, experiences and advice to support each other and enjoy learning more about growing these unique varieties.



Just a small sample of the dwarf tomato seeds saved in Autumn 2022

The Dwarf Tomato Project is exciting because of the unique varieties of tomatoes that have been developed locally but also because it is part of the Open Source Seed Initiative (OSSI). At Canberra Seed Savers, 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. This idea contrasts with corporate ownership and control of our food and seeds.

Most of the world's seeds are now owned by corporations. The unfortunate danger is that seeds are disappearing as major chemical companies buy out seed companies and then promote their own genetically modified seeds with their accompanying chemicals. The Open Source Seed Initiative (OSSI) seeks to protect a wide range of newly bred varieties from being targeted by these companies, and does it 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.

THE OPEN SOURCE SEED INITIATIVE (OSSI) PLEDGE

The OSSI Pledge ensures the Four Open Source Seed Freedoms for this and future generations:

1. The freedom to save or grow seed for replanting or for any other purpose.
2. The freedom to share, trade, or sell seed to others.
3. The freedom to trial and study seed and to share or publish information about it.
4. The freedom to select or adapt the seed, make crosses with it, or use it to breed new lines and varieties.

The Dwarf Tomato Project is proud to be part of this growing movement as awareness of its importance filters through the many layers of confusion around sustainability, seed sovereignty, and increasingly about food safety. We can make our choices count by choosing who we support. To choose Open Source seeds look for the OSSI logo in catalogues, on seed packets, or online.



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.'



Mobile Seed Libraries & Community Gardens

Arian McVeigh

Since 2020, Seed Savers has been working with some fabulous Canberra Organic Growers Society as community gardens and the Acton Community Garden as part of the Mobile Seed Libraries Program. Originally started with the assistance of an ACT Government grant, the program now runs as part of the ongoing work of Seed Savers. The program works by “lending” out seeds to community gardens who then grow from seed and then save seed to contribute to the living seed bank. We’ve been inspired by the generosity of COGS and other community garden growers and really enjoyed the events and workshops we’ve been able to run and learnt as much as we’ve taught!

In 2022, the Seed Library program has continued with generous donations again from participating gardens. In Autumn, we had a great time at the O'Connor COGS Garden Open Day.

Spring has seen an Introduction to Seed Saving workshop at the ever-beautiful and abundant Charnwood Community Garden, close relationships and generous donations from Erindale Community Garden, Kambah Community Garden and Acton Community Garden, and we are looking forward to participating in the Kambah Community Garden Open Day in early November. We hope to be able to lend out more seeds throughout the end of Spring and Summer and to continue our partnership with these community gardens into the future.



Introduction to Seed Saving at Charnwood COGS Garden



Making Seed Bombs at O'Connor Community Garden Open Day



Saving seeds from the Acton Community Garden, Canberra Environment Centre

Seedlings for Community Autumn & Spring 2022

Rosemary Castle and Minde Bruce on behalf of the Seedlings for Community Group

The Community Seedling Program goes from strength to strength, continuing to give Canberrans in need the chance to try their hand at growing food and saving seed. Volunteers grow food plants from seed at home and donate seedlings to food pantries, community organisations and selected schools. These organisations pass seedlings on to their clients or use them in teaching programs or to feed their communities.



Minde and Rosemary

AUTUMN PROGRAM

Despite a slower than planned start due to covid and particularly savage bouts with rats and cabbage moths, the Autumn Program which started in February concluded very successfully in early May with 23 registered growers having produced 2600 seedlings which were distributed to 13 organisations via 70 deliveries.

Some exciting new organisations came on board in Autumn: TuckerBox Hackett, Holy Covenant Community Garden, Community Services#1, Companion House, and Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services. It was encouraging that Companion House, after a trial run, has since twice upped the weekly number of seedlings to be delivered due to their popularity.

Other organisations asked to continue receiving seedlings: Communities@Work, St John's, Canberra City Care, Black Mountain School, Woden School, Abbeyfield Garran, Cranleigh School and Galilee School.

The feedback was wonderful.

It's been fantastic, clients have loved it and it's been a way for us to find the green thumb pantry clients
Community Services#1

The seedling program is wonderful. Clients love them! We would like to continue when Spring comes please. Feedback – all positive and seeing the happy faces when they receive the pots – priceless!
Companion House

Thanks for your support, the clients have appreciated the plants. It has been a very successful program and we would love to continue our partnership in the future.
Communities@Work

Our volunteers celebrated with a morning tea at the National Museum Café in May, the first opportunity to get together due to covid concerns.



Rosemary from Canberra Seed Savers with Judi, a Communities@Work volunteer

SPRING PROGRAM

The popularity of the Program continues to increase and Rosemary Castle was therefore delighted to welcome Minde Bruce as joint co-ordinator this Spring. Working closely together, Minde looks after the north side of Canberra and Rosemary the south.

A record number of growers (27) signed up, a mix of very experienced and complete novices. One of the joys of the Program is the camaraderie and the sharing of tips and experience between growers, especially through their private Facebook group but also through face-to-face contact. We thank Cath Williams for inviting all growers to morning tea at her bush property and for a chance to unravel the mystery of how she produces her lush seedlings.

New organisations have joined us this Spring, notably the Arawang Emergency Relief Hub, the Kippax Uniting Relief Pantry and the Gordon Community Centre Pantry. We have also provided seedlings to Circle of Kindness, a local group dedicated to settling refugee families in Canberra. In addition, we have a plan in place to support Meridian in its work with the LGBTIQ+ community.

Many organisations with which we've worked in the past, enthusiastically signed up again for Spring: Communities@Work, Community Services#1, Abbeyfield Garran, Woden School, Companion House, Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services, Black Mountain School, Cranleigh School, Canberra City Care, TuckerBox Hackett and Capital Region Community Services.

By the end of October, we had distributed more than 2000 seedlings with still more to come before the Program finishes in December. We consistently receive feedback that our seedlings are in high demand and much valued.

We thank all our dedicated volunteers for their time and energy in helping Canberrans discover the delights of growing food and saving seed.



Garden beds at the Kippax Uniting Relief Pantry

VI. WORKING GROUPS

Native Seed Saving Working Group

Thea O'Loughlin and Sarah Ayrton

Shaking off the shackles of covid restrictions and embracing the rain of a second and third la-nina season, the Native Seed Working Group has been growing in momentum and interest over the last year. Kicking off with our first field trip for native plant identification and seed collection on December 12th 2021, Steve Bruce from the Parks and Conservation Service provided a guided walk of Budjan Galindji Grassland Reserve in Franklin. Members were led through waist high grass and learnt how to identify native forms and grasses and how to collect seeds, and learnt about ecological burns, weed management, soil scrapes and direct native seed sowing.

Building from this event, an email list and private facebook group were created for native lovers. The emailing group of 28 addressees is emailed native seed notices and news quarterly while the small (35 members) but active native facebook group has members posting weekly about their home grown natives, bush tucker recipes, and local native flora events.

The first non-commercial native plant collection licence that Canberra Seed Savers held expired on July 26 2022. A report on collections during the year was prepared for Compliance and Licencing (ACT Gov) by coordinators of the Native Seed Working Group, and a new licence was issued which will expire in late July 2023. All Canberra Seed Savers members are invited to access and use the licence to collect native seed from public land (after being briefed on the permit conditions).



Native Seed Working Group Budjan Galindji native seeds 12 Dec 2022

A hands on 'Growing Natives' workshop was held on July 30th 2022, where over 20 members braved 4°C (but sunny!) weather on July 30th at the Environment Centre. Participants moved between three tables to learn about sowing, separating and striking natives. Some brought branches to share and Kat (Ginninderra Catchment Group) lead us through striking of firm wood cuttings. Sarah showed us how to sow native tussock seed *Poa* sp, and Thea demonstrated how to separate established natives into new plants. The Native Seed Bank was open with many donating, and everyone took home plants and seeds to grow on at home.



Kat teaches the techniques of firm wood cutting propagation at the 'Growing Natives' workshop



Sarah demonstrates sowing native seeds at the 'Growing Native' workshop



A propagated Banksia cutting which was taken home by a member from the 'Growing Natives' workshop

The propagation workshop and the CSS Spring Seed Swap in August saw an amazing influx of donations to the native seed bank this year. The native seed bank now hosts dozens of species which CSS members can access. These include locally found species such as Chocolate Lily (*Arthropodium strictum*), Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*), Ovens Wattle (*Acacia pravissima*), and even natives from outside Canberra, such as Sturt Desert Pea (*Swainsona formosa*) plus many more!

NATIVE SEED SURVEY

The first 'Native Seed Survey' was launched in September 2022 to help understand what our members love about natives and how best to direct the future of the group. Responses are still being collected and all members are welcome to add their voices!

Find the survey here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/19FIXNBcrTFa9S5t5dVTWFZAkdrBwwG4SvcCgb6ZCya8/edit>



Native Seed Working Group Budjan Galindji tour Common Everlasting Daisy and Blue Devil 12 Dec 2022

The Native Seed Working Group was established in March 2021. The aim is to learn about native seed saving and growing of native plants which are local to the Canberra area, to work with and learn from traditional owners and conservation organisations. Members of the working group work to not harm our local environment and protect the delicate ecological balance, and respect the laws and ethics which apply to native seed saving in the Canberra region. If you would like to join this working group, please email canberraseedsavers@gmail.com



VII. WORKSHOPS

ARIAN MCVEIGH

During 2022, we held 11 workshops as well as attending and running many community events. Workshops are free for Canberra Seed Savers members and paid for members of the broader community. All workshops are designed and delivered by Canberra Seed Savers volunteers. Through hands-on workshops, we aim to educate and inspire our community about growing and saving seeds and help people have the confidence to give it a go! More than 140 people attended workshops held this year.

After Covid restrictions lifted in the middle of the year, we enjoyed being able to get out into the community for more face-to-face events. Many thanks to the Canberra Environment Centre for administrative, organising and venue support for many workshops, particularly for organising Floriade opportunities for Canberra Seed Savers this year.

Introduction to Seed Saving, Charnwood COGS Garden, 16th October 2022, Arian McVeigh

Growing From Seed, Canberra Environment Centre, 25th September 2022, Thea O'Loughlin and Jeanette Mills

Floriade: Intro to Seed Saving (2 workshops) September & October 2022 Arian McVeigh and Cath Williams

Floriade: Making Seed Bombs (2 workshops) September & October 2022 Arian McVeigh and Natalie Kerr

Introduction to Seed Saving, Canberra City Farm, 4th September, Arian McVeigh and Rosemary Castle

Growing from Seed, Michelago Railway Station, 28th August 2022, Arian McVeigh, Melissa Fellows and Belinda Sierzschula

Making Seed Bombs, Little Greenies Libraries ACT, Tuggeranong Library, 20th August 2022, Chrissie Atkinson, Arian McVeigh and Natalie Kerr

Growing natives: Sowing and Striking, Canberra Environment Centre, 30th July 2022 Sarah Ayrton, Kat McGilp and Thea O'Loughlin

Introduction to Seed Saving, Michelago Town Hall, 26th June 2022, Arian McVeigh and Belinda Sierzschula

Saving Seed from Summer Veggies, Canberra Environment Centre, 22 February, Melissa Fellows and Arian McVeigh



Thea facilitating the Growing from Seed workshop at the Canberra Environment Centre, 25 Sept 2022



Kat facilitating Native Seed Sowing and Striking



Arian and Cath facilitating Introduction to Seed Saving at Floriade, September 2022



The recipe for seed bombs is simple



Growing Veggies From Seed, Michelago



VIII. EVENTS

This year, particularly Spring, has been a busy and fun time for Canberra Seed Savers with so many great opportunities to connect with our community and share the love of seed saving after Covid restrictions were lifted in the middle of the year. As well as holding many workshops, we were delighted to be able to run and attend many community events. Canberra Seed Savers volunteers organise and run events ranging from holding the big Autumn and Seed Swaps and regular Seedy Saturdays, to running stalls and mini workshops at community events.

Events Run by Canberra Seed Savers

All of our events are designed, organised and run by groups of volunteers. Volunteering at an event is open to anyone and is a fun way to learn more about Canberra Seed Savers and contribute to our work; learn about seed growing and saving from experts and share your knowledge and experiences; and to connect with like-minded members of our community. Thank you to all of the amazing volunteers (more than 30 this year!) who helped to make our events successful and fun!

Autumn Seed Swap

Late summer is a great time to swap saved spring and summer seeds for autumn and winter favourites like coriander, broad beans, silverbeet; brassicas like broccoli and cauliflower, and leafy greens. At the end of February, around 40 people came along to the Autumn Seed Swap at the Canberra Environment Centre and generous donations were made by both backyard and community gardeners. We enjoyed the session outside and a few keen beans helped to clean and process bags of seeds still attached to the dried plants. We even had a quick tutorial on winnowing, the ancient seed saving process that uses wind and breath to separate seeds from plant chaff.

Spring Seed Swap

Our Spring Seed Swap was a huge event this year with around 100 enthusiastic seedy people attending to donate, swap and buy seed. Fifteen volunteers helped to prepare for and run the day which was a lot of fun as well as a lot of work! Valuable lessons were learned and a review conducted to help us make sure our payments systems improve for next year. Hundreds of varieties of seeds were available to swap and buy and as always, more seed was donated than taken and so the living seed bank received a tremendous boost in stocks for distribution throughout spring. We were even visited by ACT Minister for Environment, Rebecca Vasserotti who stopped by to chat to swappers. After the event, and the big pack up, volunteers enjoyed a communal lunch in the gardens of the Canberra Environment Centre and chatted about all things seedy.

Monthly Seedy Saturdays

Every third Saturday of the month, we hold our Seedy Saturdays at the Canberra Environment Centre. Activities range from seed cleaning and processing (check out the photos of cleaning the mammoth silverbeet!) to seed packing and skills shares on growing from seed or winnowing and wet-processing of seeds. Always there are cups of tea, yummy goodies to eat and lots of chats about how the season is going. Advice and experience is shared, and community connections blossom.

As well as running our own events, and workshops, we love joining in with other groups and organisations to celebrate our fabulous Canberra community. Throughout the year we attend markets, festivals and open days to build connections with our community and to spread the seedy love.

Here are some of the community events that Canberra Seed Savers attended this year.

- Native Seed Walk and Talk, Sunday 12th December 2021, Budjan Galindji Grassland Reserve, coordinated by Sarah
- Pearce Markets, December 2021, Pearce, coordinated by Rosemary
- Narrabundah Festival, Saturday 2nd April 2022, Kootara Crescent, Narrabundah, coordinated by Cath, Mel and Thea
- Pearce Markets, April 2022, coordinated by Rosemary
- Bungendore Harvest Festival Markets, Saturday 9th April, 2022, Bungendore, coordinated by Mel
- O'Connor COGS open day, Saturday 23rd April 2022, O'Connor COGs garden, coordinated by Arian
- Pearce Community Market, Saturday 23rd April 2022, Pearce Community Centre, Rosemary
- Gungahlin Community Council Meeting, Wednesday 8th June 2022, Eastlakes Gungahlin Club coordinated by Sarah
- Tuggeranong Springfest, Saturday 17th September 2022, Tuggeranong Uniting Church, coordinated by Sarah
- Celebrate Gungahlin Community Picnic, Saturday 29 October 2022, Yerrabi Pond District Park, coordinated by Sarah

A number of planned spring 2022 events were cancelled due to rain and hopefully will be rescheduled. We would love to be able to go to more markets and festivals, can you help? Your donation of a couple of hours on a stall, in company with other seed savers, means we can accept more invitations to community events. We'd love to hang out with you and be able to reach even more Canberrans!



Seed Swap Shennanigans





IX. THE LIVING SEED BANK & SEED DISTRIBUTION

The number of seeds sold, swapped and given has increased again this year. The ongoing challenge of packing enough seeds to meet demand for swaps and sales and for members has been solved through the hard work and organisation of our new Seed Bank Working Group, assisted by a team of home-based seed packing experts!

THE LIVING SEED BANK & LIBRARY

The seed library is the bank from which all seeds are distributed, and it has undergone an both an increase in seed stock from donations and also a thorough organisation over the past year. A dedicated team of volunteers meet once a week to organise donations and seed stocks, to prepare labels and kits for more volunteers to pack seeds at home. This is a fun and social event on a Tuesday morning at the Canberra Environment Centre and everyone is welcome to come along. Thanks to

Many members and non-members are donating from their gardens, showing a large number of seed savers in the community, and a bigger pool from which we can sell and swap locally-adapted seed.

A very special addition to the living seed bank this year is the Rocco's Tomato, with a large stock of seeds donated by Ash Violi of Bungendore in time for distribution at our Spring Seed Swap. We hope that many Canberrans will be growing and saving these precious local heirloom seeds this season and we look forward to making more of them publicly available next year.

SEED SALES

Canberra Seed Savers sells seeds to raise funds for our work including workshops, events and the Community Seedlings program. We are a not for profit co-operative and all work is done by volunteers. Seed sales are an important part of ensuring the viability of the Cooperative but it is not our main activity or focus.

The Food Co-op in Acton is the main place people can buy seeds as well as at Local Press Wholefoods in Kingston and the Stromlo Lil Street Library. In 2022, seed sales have also started at the Michelago General Store.

Stalls run at markets and festivals always include a box of seeds for sale and of course we sell some seeds at our twice yearly seed swaps.

SEEDS FOR MEMBERS

Each year members join or renew they receive 3 packets of seeds.

X. SEED BANK WORKING GROUP

As our Living Seed Bank grows, and the generous donations from Canberrans flow through our network, the Living Seed Bank has gotten a little unruly. Actually, at the beginning of 2022, it was a mess! This year a group of super volunteers has taken on the challenge to bring the Living Seed Bank under control, to bring order and organisation and to do the sorting, boxing, label making, packing, preparing kits for home-based seed packers and general wizardry required to make the Living Seed Bank work.

The Seed Bank Working Group has been meeting weekly on Tuesdays in 2022. Without the work of this group, it would be impossible to know what seeds are in the seed bank and, importantly, to ensure that they are distributed out into the community through markets, festivals, shops and to members directly. It is no exaggeration to say that the successful operation of the Living Seed Bank relies on their work, perseverance, good humour and patience.

Tuesday sessions are a lot of fun with lots of lots of laughter, chats, plant and seed swapping and It's a friendly and fun group, welcoming of new members. Highlights of each session are the baked treats by Natalie and coffee made by Jeanette. Newer group members say it's a great way to learn more about seeds by handling and identifying them and learning from the wealth of knowledge of experienced gardeners like Joh and Cath which is so generously shared in chats along the way. And the regular cry of triumph after a session is 'look, another empty box (or 3)!' as more disorganised boxes of seeds are unpacked, re-ordered, labelled and filed into the storage system boxes courtesy of Sarah. It's a very satisfying feeling! Come along and join in!



XI. MEDIA

During 2022, Seed Savers has continued to get good local media promotion and support. We love getting the seedy message out there and infecting more Canberrans with the passion for seeds!

This year Arian has been lucky enough to have multiple chats with the lovely folks on ABC Canberra 666 radio and Radio 2CC talking about everything from how to prepare your garden for spring, to the Dwarf Tomato Project, to the Seedlings for Community program and the amazing work of all the volunteer growers and deliverers who are making a very generous and much appreciated contribution to our local community.

Lucy Ridge, the fantastic food writer for Riot Act wrote two lovely pieces this year: one on Canberra Seed Savers and the Living Seed Bank and another on the Community Seedlings Program. Lucy's writing is lovely to read and her connection to the Canberra community and passion for all things food shines through. Thank you for your support, Lucy!

You can check out the articles here:

Community Seedling Program, 8 July 2022

<https://the-riotact.com/volunteers-plant-seed-of-cooperation-to-ease-cost-of-living-pressures/570716>

Canberra Seed Savers Cooperative, 6 March 2022

<https://the-riotact.com/meet-the-seedy-community-planting-generations-of-change/537608>



XII. BEING PART OF SEED SAVERS

There are many ways to be an active member of, and contribute to the purposes of, the Canberra Seed Savers Co-operative. From running workshops to growing seedlings, web design to processing or donating seeds. Benefits of membership include access to seeds from the core seed bank in proportion to contributions and efforts made to further the aims and activities of the Co-operative.

Join or renew your membership of Canberra Seed Savers Cooperative via the website:
<https://canberraseedsavers.org.au/join-the-cooperative/>

Membership is annual and your membership will be valid for one year from the end of the month you join.

Membership fees are: waged \$10/year unwaged/ student \$5/year.

Once your membership application is received, we'll send you bank account details for direct deposit.

You can read the Canberra Seed Savers Co-operative Ltd. rules at the above link.

Membership applications will be considered by the Cooperative Board and new members will receive a welcome email including your membership number.

