



Annual Report

November 2022-November 2023



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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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Board Report	2
II. Treasurer's Report	5
III. Membership Report	8
IV. Online Engagement Report	10
V. Programs	12
a. Dwarf Tomato Project	12
b. Community Seedling Program	16
VI. Working Groups	18
a. Seed Bank Working Group	18
b. Native Seed Working Group	19
VII. Workshops & Events	21
VIII. Resources	23
IX. Civil Involvement	24
X. Being Part of Seed Savers	25

I. BOARD REPORT

Every year Canberra Seed Savers (CSS) grows and changes as more members become active and share their ideas and their energy. As a not-for-profit cooperative and network of backyard growers, CSS is powered entirely by the passion and dedication of volunteers. We all work together through programs, education and outreach to deliver our mission of educating and inspiring more Canberrans to save seeds and grow food at home, and operate the living seed bank for the benefit of our community.

2023 has seen some disruption for CSS as well as many social and educational events and much fun. Spring was once again busy with a big emphasis on outreach through festivals and markets, which saw us go to many events. We love these opportunities to connect with our community and to spread the inspiration and joy of seed saving. Earlier in the year, the (forced) movement of the Canberra Environment Centre (CEC) from their long-term home at the ANU created quite an amount of disruption for our operations. In events, our Spring Seed Swap was a huge success again this year, with well over 100 people coming along to donate, swap and buy seeds in late winter, ready for some early spring gardening.

MOVING HOUSE

We were very sad to say farewell to our home at the CEC. We've enjoyed many years of collaboration and cohabitation and friendship with the CEC, and our cooperative relationship has really helped to boost the development of the capacity of CSS. In March this year, they were evicted from the ANU site and the buildings they were housed in were demolished. This movement displaced CSS as well, and resulted in us needing to spend a lot of time and energy on finding a new host organisation or at least a place to house our living seed bank and run workshops and events. Despite the best intentions of CSS and the CEC, we weren't able to find a way to collocate at their new space at Gungaharra Homestead in Mitchell. We continue to collaborate with them on events and workshops, and were so happy they could host our Spring Seed Swap this year. The Homestead is a beautiful space and we're excited to work with them on development of their new garden, which will hopefully include a seed garden.

During the year, we set up arrangements with the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) School of Horticulture, who have been providing storage for our equipment and up until recently, the seed bank. Since September, our seed bank has been generously hosted by the Southern Harvest Association (SHA) in one of their shipping containers at the Canberra City Farm (CCF). CCF have provided access to their buildings and other facilities for CSS activities, including our regular weekly seed bank working bees.

CSS originally started as part of CCF many years ago in 2016, and has enjoyed productive and cooperative relationships with both SHA and CCF for many years. We're delighted to be working so closely together, and look forward to the mutual opportunities and benefits that will be created, including distribute even more seeds (!!) and running workshops in the new year.

HAVING OUR SAY... ACT FOOD AND FIBRE STRATEGY

In September and October of this year, we coordinated a detailed submission in response to the ACT Government Local Food Strategy. CSS representatives also advocated for greater inclusion of seeds in local food policy to Minister Vassarotti's office and ACT Government through meetings and correspondence. In 2023, we have focused on being vocal about the crucial role of local seeds in a local food system. CSS has also worked with other local community food organisations to advocate for the infrastructure, resources and political support to build a robust local food economy based on existing community.

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

CSS' key programs including the Dwarf Tomato Project and the Community Seedling Program have gone from strength to strength this year. Check out the detailed reports from coordinators and all the great photos too! The Seed Bank Working Group has kept up regular activity, building a thriving social and productive network and providing many hundreds of seed packets. They also have the seed bank in top shape despite lots of disruption this year due to lack of accommodation! The Michelago group has had regular catch-ups and the seed box in the local store has been pumping out seeds for the local community. The results from the survey of members by our Native Seed Bank Working Group have given the group focus and direction to start planning more events next year.

During the year, CSS fulfilled two grants from the ACT Government which helped to improve our capacity through increased resources. These include an amazing new branded marquee, new tables, and a tablet to use at markets, a freezer to store and treat sensitive seeds, and equipment to help us record better quality educational videos related to seed saving! Thanks to the ACT Government for support through grants programs.

VOLUNTEERS, COMMUNITY!

All of this amazing work is done by volunteers! Across a network of more than 30 active volunteers, seeds were saved and sorted, packed and labelled, grown and given away through events like the Spring Seed Swap, many, many markets, our regular seedy outlets, and through our massively, hugely impactful, Community Seedling Program. Hundreds of conversations were had at festival and market stalls; boxes and marquees carried around and table-cloths washed; decisions were made and reports written; native seeds collected; spreadsheets wrangled; minutes of meetings were recorded and finances accounted; seed packet labels produced; events planned and run; and endless cups of tea and wine drunk. All volunteers!

The Board (also volunteers!) is massively grateful and in awe of the efforts of all CSS active members who volunteer their time and energy to build our network and living seed bank, and to share the inspiration, knowledge and joy of seed saving.

2024 looks exciting for CSS. With less energy needing to be spent on basic logistics like accommodation and a steady increase in active members volunteering, the Board feel we have more capacity and drive than ever to expand programs like Seed Stewards, and to reinvigorate our workshops and educational programs.

Hope to see you at something seedy soon!



Canberra Seed Savers Board Members



II. TREASURER'S REPORT

GABY HO

INCOME

Our income for the year was \$7389.37 (\$4599.37 not including migration amounts). This was made up of seed sales of \$2985.37 from various avenues (the Food Coop and Local Press, seed swaps, markets etc.), membership fees (\$990) and the rest (\$715 - or \$3505) from workshops and fundraising events and bank interest (\$148.72).

Grants

We received income from two grants in the 2022 financial year:

- ACT Government Community Support and Infrastructure Grant - \$700
- ACT Government Technology Upgrade Grant - \$3220

Both grants were expended in the 2023 financial year. See the report on resources for more details on grants.

EXPENDITURE

Our expenses for the year totalled \$8053.57 (or \$6627.41 not including community seedlings rollover of \$1426.16), including \$225 for accounting fees, \$3374 in expenditure of grant monies and \$2218.33 (or \$792.17 less rollover amount) for other expenses including fees for various platforms (e.g. SquarePay) and market stall fees. This leaves our loss for the year at \$515.48.

Our expenses have increased due to increased usage of platforms and as a result of regular activities and seed swaps being held at various locations following the Canberra Environment Centre's move from ANU to Gungaharra Homestead. Supplies for the Spring 2022 Community Seedlings Program were significant. These expenses have been reduced to almost zero in Spring 2023 thanks to support from Powell's Stock Feed and Martins with provision of potting mix and use of Seed Savers' seeds.

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. We have used the CSSC's funds to purchase infrastructure and services to support community outreach, including IT equipment, SquarePay facilities and upgrades to the website and email. Our seed sales have increased from FY 22.

Our current bank balance as at 1 December 2023 was \$5287.37. 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.

Canberra Seed Savers Cooperative Ltd

Profit and Loss Statement

For the period from 01/07/2022 to 30/06/2023

Accrual basis

30/06/2023

Income

Donations/Gifts Received	15.00
Fundraising Income	-
Membership Fees	990.00
Miscellaneous Income	200.00
Sales - CEC Calendars	45.00
Sales - Food Co-op	519.00
Sales - Seed Savers Books	320.00
Sales - Seeds	2,010.37
Workshop	3,290.00
Total -- Income	7,389.37

Grant Income

Community Support Grant - Income	-
Infrastructure Grant - Income	-
Total -- Grant Income	0.00

Less: Less: Cost of Goods Sold

Consumables	-
Seed Savers Books	342.00
Seed Supplies	679.65
Seeds	1,022.30
Square Fees	5.07
Workshop Supplies	85.42
Total -- Less: Cost of Goods Sold	2,134.44

Less: Expenses

Accounting fees and Bookkeeping	225.00
Advertising and Marketing	53.90
Community Seedlings	1,421.16
Food	150.00
Internet	129.27
Market Stalls	70.00
Miscellaneous Expense	394.00
Postage	-
Printing and stationery	101.80
Grant Expenses	

Infrastructure Grant - Expenses	2,674.00
Community Support Grant - Expenses	700.00
Total – Grant Expenses	3,374.00
Total – Expenses	5,919.13
Other Income	
Interest received	148.72
Net profit (loss)	(515.48)

Bank balance as at 1 July 2022 \$8135.02 (incl. grant money) / \$4215.02 (excl. grant)
 Bank balance as at 30 June 2023 \$7119.54 (incl. grant money)



III. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

NICK STANIFORTH

2022/23 saw membership numbers remain relatively steady. At the time of the 2022 AGM (2 November 2022) we had 169 financial members: as at 28 November 2023, we have 151 members. Membership numbers have remained in the 150-170 band for much of the year.

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.

The 'pro-forma' membership application asks people applying for membership to provide a name, email address, phone number and a postal address. 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.

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.

WHO ARE OUR MEMBERS ?

As we do not ask for date of birth or gender identification, we cannot determine an age or gender distribution of members. 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. The Cooperative was registered and started accepting memberships in April 2019.

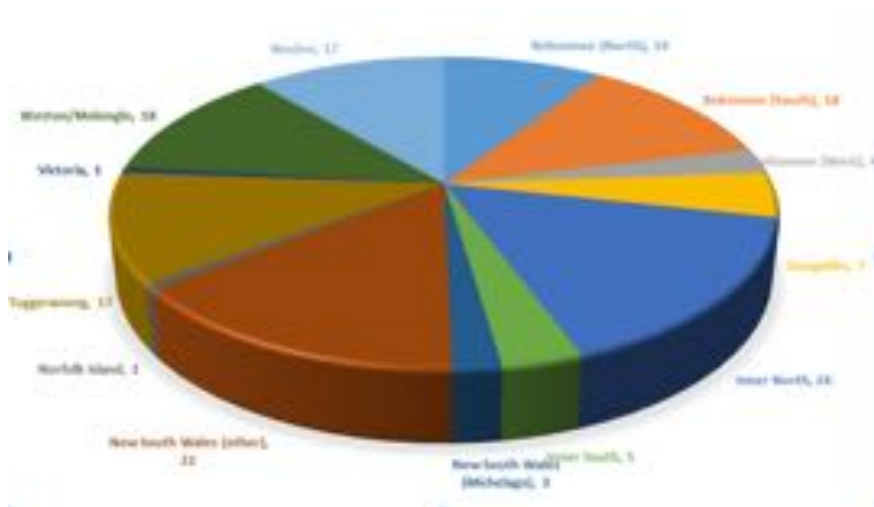
Length of membership

**Of our 151 members at
21 November 2023:**

- **3 are in their 5th year**
- **11 are in their 4th year**
- **15 are in their 3rd year**
- **30 are in their 2nd year**
- **92 are in their first year**

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 graph below:



HOW DO OUR MEMBERS FIND US

From July 2023, we have included a (non-required) multi-option question on our membership application so we can know how people find out about us. Of the 62 people who have applied to become members since July 2023, the following graph shows their chosen option:



MEMBERSHIP TURNOVER

Membership turnover remains quite high. Since the incorporation of Canberra Seed Savers Co-operative, we have received a total of 458 membership applications, of which 48 were duplicate applications. A further 19 applicants did not go on to complete their membership. Of the remaining 391 applicants who become members, 151 remain members as at 21 November 2023. All members whose membership is about to/has just 'lapsed' are sent a reminder email. While we do not subsequently contact 'lapsed' members to find out why they did not choose to renew their memberships, we believe this relates to Canberra Seed Savers' policy of providing immediate value to members on joining – in the form of three free packets of seed. Anecdotally, it seems many people join when they buy seeds at a market or event and then, despite best intentions, don't find time to engage further.

IV. ONLINE ENGAGEMENT REPORT

KARINA BONTES FORWARD

This last year has seen somewhat consistent engagement on all communications fronts, but with less than previous years. This is also balanced out as the number of active volunteers increases, and conversations are happening in Facebook groups more rather than outward-facing social media. Facebook continues being the main social media following, although Instagram has started to pick up pace. The newsletter continues to be one of the main news channels for members and non-members alike. Content and consistency continue, but there is a definite need for more volunteers to be working on comms for everything be of a better standard, and to harness the potential we have to connect with our audience and have a more targeted messaging approach. These things become more important as we grow as an organisation.

Mailing List

The newsletter has remained monthly over the past year, only taking the usual break over the summer. There has been steady readership and continued increased subscribership, with good open rates. Consistency is a hallmark of success here, and without a 'live' website, the newsletter has been one of the main channels for hearing about news and opportunities, and the only online channel that is not social media. The subscribership is currently at 900, up from 699 at the last AGM. Taking into account 47 unsubscribes/cleaned accounts and the 248 new subscribers, this is a net increase of 29%, down from 44.5% for the 2021-22 period – though there is a slight increase in absolute numbers (239 new subscribers last year to 248 this year). Campaign performance has fluctuated between 38-58% with an average of 51% (high), reflecting a similar figure to last year and also a confirmation of the importance of the newsletter.

Social Media

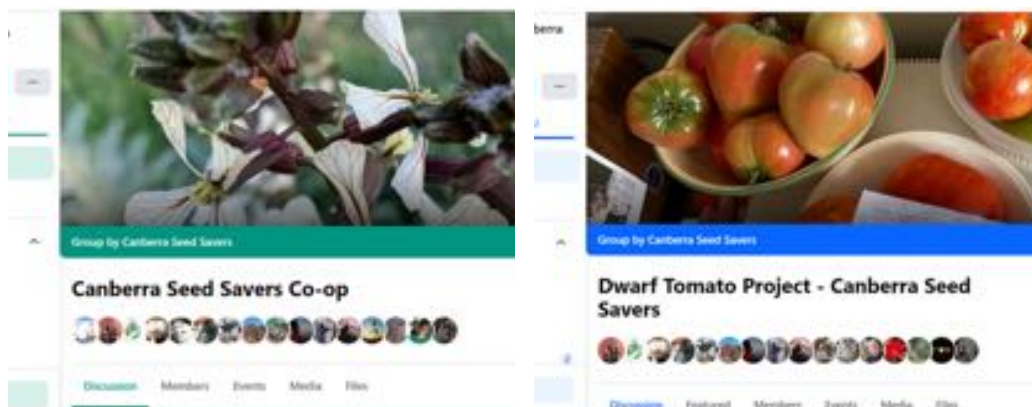
The platforms used are Facebook and Instagram, with Facebook still being the more active, though Instagram engagement continues to increase. On Facebook, the main page has primary outreach and has had a small rise in followers, greatly decreased from last year. We now have 2097 followers, an 11% increase (201 new followers).

The CSS Co-op private Facebook group, a place for community engagement, has continued to grow, though not as much as last year. Last year the group saw a 166.5% increase in membership – this year only brought 58 new members, an increase of 14%. However, the engagement in the group is quite good, and it continues to be a place for general conversation and activity, though this could probably be further harnessed. The membership requirements for this group have also been clarified to be for locals to the Canberra region only (with some notable exceptions), and people do not have to be members of the co-operative to join. Facebook groups have also been an invaluable tool for communication for different working groups and programs.

The Instagram account has increased up from 569 followers to 703 followers this year, an increase of 23.5%, similar to last year. There is not huge engagement here, and could be further harnessed, especially as many community organisations do use it and we could do well to build on those connections.

Website

The website is an important place for exchange of information and also engages members who aren't active on social media. It has been mostly static, but this is about to change! This year the Co-op used funds from an ACT government grant to redesign the website with the help of a dedicated member, Cindy Pak. This has been ongoing for some months, but we are nearing the refining stages to launch the new website, probably early in the new year. Watch this space!



100
Posts

703
Followers

366
Following

Canberra Seed Savers Coop

Community Organization

Growing, saving and sharing locally grown



Volunteers - Community Seedling Program >

Private group · 31 members



Canberra Seed Savers

1.8K likes · 2K followers



We work cooperatively to protect our heritage of open-pollinated seeds and build a living seed bank

V. PROGRAMS

Dwarf Tomato Project

Thea O'Loughlin, Joh Sheehan & Arian McVeigh

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 Nuske-Small 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.

www.dwarftomatoproject.net

CANBERRA DTP BRANCH

This volunteer group who collectively help to steward seeds of over 30 varieties of dwarf tomatoes just keeps growing and growing and GROWING! How could we resist the huge range of beautiful colours, shapes, sizes and tastes from tomatoes with names that more than nod to their Australian-bred heritage? From the Uluru Ochre to the Kookaburra Cackle to the Gondwana Moon or the Adelaide Festival, there's so much variety to be enjoyed on plants that grow small enough to fit in a pot on a balcony.

In Autumn 2023, we got to enjoy a celebration of the fruits of our labour with a tomato tasting (and judging!) session in the Canberra Environment Centre garden. With much excitement and anticipation (and some very nice accompanying cheese and wine), we tasted so many tomatoes - brown ones, orange ones, berries and beefsteak. Steve did a fantastic job of cutting up our prize tomatoes into bite size morsels so everyone got to taste, and we all enjoyed our last official event at the CEC garden. Check out the photos below! The unanimous winner of best tasting tomatoes were Fred's Tie Dye, Uluru Ochre, and Tasmanian Chocolate.



Tomato Tasting February 2023

But it's not just about eating delicious tomatoes! Although, that is a very important part of the project! We also saved HEAPS of seed and learnt lots about tomato seed saving thanks to the generosity of Patrina. We learnt how to identify which flowers will produce good fruit and how to identify fruit that seed shouldn't be saved from.

The 22/23 season ended with solid returns of saved seeds to the DTP Seed Bank, providing good stock for season 23/24. At the end of June, the 22/23 season was wrapped up with a lovely morning tea at Natalie's. Growers celebrated successes, commiserated losses, shared learnings and contributed seed. Eight growers donated seed at the end of the season. The wet season was challenging, initially with poor germination, then slow growth and growers battling many diseases and pests. Despite this, there were many success stories.

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.



You can still eat the tomatoes you save seeds from, just remove the seeds BEFORE cooking! (Sarah and Cath's delicious creations!)



"Fasciated" flowers - let them grow but don't save seed from that fruit or pluck off the plant before fruiting (Jeanette)



"Cat-faced" tomato - not great for seed saving (Thea)

In August, Arian and Thea presented the CSS DTP to the Seed Savers Connect network. Over 50 people tuned in across Australia and NZ to learn we about the program and ask questions.

The CSS DTP seed bank now boasts an impressive thirty-six varieties, all grown and saved in the Canberra region (with seed stocks originating from Patrina's own seed). Some varieties, including Sturt Desert Pea and Sweet Scarlet, have enough seed in the seed bank to make them available more broadly to all members via the broader CSS seed bank, and have been available at events.

Mid-year, Thea and Joh stepped into Arian's huge boots to coordinate the 23/24 season. This year, following a stocktake from the DTP seed bank, varieties with a dwindling number of seeds were targeted to ensure these rarer types don't disappear in Canberra. As a result, 29 varieties of dwarfie seeds were distributed to seventeen enthusiastic germinators working diligently to grow seedlings for distribution.

Around 25 germinators and growers met at Kambah Woolshed on 22 October for the great DTP Swap. Germinators dropped off their beautiful seedlings and growers were invited to pick them up. This was also a fantastic opportunity to meet other growers and learn from each other while sharing a yummy afternoon tea. Seedling distribution continued from Thea's veranda for several weeks, and almost 350 dwarfie babies have gone to growers' homes in and around Canberra with the intent to learn, enjoy and save seed to donate back into the DTP seed bank.

Both Joh and Thea are data geeks, so here is a summary of some DTP fun facts!

Type	Variety	Sum of Weight	Number of plants	Yeild per plant	Ranking per plant
DTP	Sturt Desert Pea	6832	1	6832	1
DTP	Gondwana Lava	6377	1	6377	2
DTP	Clare Valley Red	4446	1	4446	3
DTP	Crimson Rosella	4290	1	4290	4
DTP	Gondwana Moon	3938	1	3938	5
DTP	Tasmanian Chocolate	3897	1	3897	6
DTP	Summertime Gold	7683	2	3841.5	7
DTP	Wilpena	3568	1	3568	8
DTP	Uluru Ocre	3037	1	3037	9
DTP	Kookaburra Cackle	2632	1	2632	10
DTP	Green Kangaroo Paw	2391	1	2391	11
DTP	Bundaberg Rum Balls	1771	1	1771	12
DTP	Loxton Lass	3314	2	1657	13
DTP	Mallee Rose	1631	1	1631	14
DTP	Pink Passion	795	1	795	15
15 varieties		56.60 kg	17 individual plants		

The DTP Facebook page continues to be a place for growers to share information, successes and struggles and currently has 43 members, with posts and discussions daily. The email list has swollen to 69 subscribers, who are emailed quarterly with updates, events, and resources.

Using information contributed by germinators and growers via the 2022-23 DTP survey, Joh and Thea have developed a Dwarf Tomato Varieties Information Pages, which will soon be added to the CSS webpage. This will be a living document which aims to provide members with information about DTPs which we have grown in the Canberra region. The growing characteristics, challenges, yield and tasting notes.

We encourage anyone involved in the program to take photos of their plants, their fruit and contribute via our annual DTP survey or get in touch via canberraseedsavers@gmail.com



Drying out post-fermented dwarfie seeds



Patrina, tomato guru, breeder of amazing dwarf tomatoes and mentor to many growers



Celebrating the end of the season

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 Seedling Program Spring 2023

Rosemary Castle and Minde Bruce

Another highly successful spring community seedling program is running at the moment. As of 24 November, 18 new and returning volunteer growers have sent out 1715 seedlings into the world through the following mix of 18 previous and new* organisations:

Community Services #1 pantry, Narrabundah
Tucker Box pantry, Hackett
Canberra City Care community garden and pantry, Charnwood
Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services
Companion House, Assisting Survivors of Torture and Trauma
Woden School, Deakin
Cranleigh School, Holt
Black Mountain School, O'Connor
Galilee School, Kambah
**Abbeyfield Garran, residence for younger people
with mild intellectual disabilities**
**GROW residential rehabilitation for people
with mental ill health, Narrabundah**
**Canberra Recovery Services residence for people
with addictions, Salvation Army***
Communities@Work, Tuggeranong and Gungahlin pantries
Hepatitis ACT, community garden*
St Benedict's Community Centre, Queanbeyan*
St John's Care pantry and community garden, Anglicare
Arawang Emergency Relief Hub, Kambah, Anglicare
Gordon Community Centre pantry, Anglicare



2023 highlights:

- Our new relationship with St Benedict's. It's the first time we have extended to Queanbeyan and Cath has been able to talk directly to St Benedict's clients about growing food;
- Being invited to participate in Cranleigh School's fete, right next to the sign pointing out our seedlings growing in Cranleigh's garden;
- Resuming seedling provision to St John's Care pantry and garden after a break and assisting its elderly volunteer gardeners to resolve infrastructure issues;
- Watching Companion House's clients' growing enthusiasm for seedlings. Sam started taking 10 a week several seasons ago and now it's 30 a week and they very quickly disappear;
- Attending Galilee School's Harvest Lunch to see its amazing new gardening setup (and to eat delicious school grown food) and being acknowledged and thanked as a partner; and
- A lovely social gathering at Joh's house!

We regularly receive wonderful feedback from our organisations and are working to make the Program sustainable for the long term, financially and in terms of volunteer effort. We were over the moon when Powells' Stockfeeds at Phillip and Martins Fertilizers at Yass donated all our soil mixes. We use a lot of them and Powells never blinked an eye when we had to go back several times for more. We are so grateful. Another innovation was asking our organisations if they could collect seedlings rather than us delivering them. Most organisations were happy to do this.

We would like to thank all our fabulous growers and the growers who delivered. You make the program fun and worthwhile and we never cease to be amazed at what you produce. At the same time, we are all learning together and encouraging each other. We especially want to thank Joh for stepping in to Minde's shoes while she was away. Thanks to her, the Program didn't miss a beat!



VI. WORKING GROUPS

Seed Bank Working Group Joh Sheehan

The Seed Library Working Group have lived a nomad life over the past 12 months. After getting the library alphabetised and packed up and moved to CIT we were sad not to be able to meet on the premises. However, we have had a lot of fun meeting at Joh's and Cath's.

We have generally met weekly, packing piles and piles of seed packs. We have enjoyed good coffee and been well fed by Natalie and more recently Gena. Over interesting and wide-ranging conversations we have packed mountains of seeds for stalls, cafes and market boxes.

Under the watchful eye of Felice (Joh's Cat), Joh has mastered the art of creating labels; Chica and Cath have honed their guillotining skills, cutting our labels to size; and all, especially Natalie, Michelle, Gena, Susan and Virginia have glued, counted and measured seeds from amaranth to zucchini.

We have all had a go at answering the question: 'What is this seed'? This happens when seed is donated to the bank with insufficient information. To enable us to populate our beautiful seed labels and ensure that we are distributing viable, correctly labelled seed, we need a seed passport/label with information about the seed name; date of collection; and, in the case of those promiscuous seeds such as cucurbits, what exclusion methods have been used to guarantee seed purity.

We are thrilled to be located at Canberra City Farm and are quickly settling in.



Native Seed Saving Working Group

Thea O'Loughlin and Sarah Ayrton

Since our last annual report, CSS have undertaken several native seedy events, participated in our inaugural Native Seed Survey and of course, collected for, accessed and donated to the native seed bank.

EVENTS

Almost straight after our last AGM in late November, a dozen CSS members were treated to a free wildflower walk at Campbell Park with local botanist Emily Sutcliffe. The group learnt how to identify local grasses, forbs and even shrubs.

Then in January, a several keen members trekked out to a bush block in Tarago for a seed collection walk with Jess Hodgson and David Mitchell. The site is a crown land block stewarded by David and Jess, and has been lightly grazed in the past and managed for weeds. The block hosts a delightful diversity of native herbs, grasses, shrubs and trees. Jess, who is an ecologist, helped with identifying the natives, and members collected seed from Wallaby Grass and Billy Button on the property for the native seed bank.

Also in January, three working group members utilised our native seed collection permit to collect seed from ACT government land. Small amounts of six species were collected, including daisies (Everlasting Daisy, New Holland Daisy), shrubs (Native Indigo, Shiny Cassinia), and cuttings of Native Raspberry.



Native Seed Working Group Budjan Galindji native seeds 12 Dec 2022

NATIVE SEED SURVEY

Late '22 and early into '23 our inaugural Native Seed Survey was polling willing members. Submissions closed in March (with one of our lucky members winning a book prize for participating!) and results were collated and released in June in our first ever Native Seed Survey report.

25 people participated and over 70% of respondents were interested in;

- Learning how to collect native seed and identify native flora
- Activities focused on native seed collecting, native plant walk/talk, plus native seed cleaning/saving sessions
- Volunteering to collect seed to donate to the native seed bank and growing natives at home to share with other members

CSS will take this insight from our members into our future native seed programs. You can read the full Native Seed Survey Report [HERE](#) (or see link on our website).

NATIVE SEED BANK

In August our members took advantage of the native seed bank being available at the Spring Seed Swap event with dozens of natives being swapped or donated. Special mention to Micheal Harvey who donated several large amounts of native seeds to the seed bank this year, all collected from his own garden in Coombs, including the wonderful local flowering plants; Chocolate Lily and Blue Devil.

COLLECTING LICENCE

In November 2024, CSS submitted our compliance report as a condition of our native plant collecting licence. This report is submitted to the ACT Governments Licensing and Compliance division and reports on all the native seed collected during the year on the license. Under the license this year, members had collected Native Indigo, a variety of daisy flowers, plus Themeda grass.



VII. WORKSHOPS + EVENTS

ARIAN MCVEIGH

After an amazing Spring Seed Swap run early in the season, it's been a fun and busy Spring, with lots of markets and community events. Earlier in the year, complications with finding somewhere to store our equipment and the living seed bank as well as to conduct events, regular working bees and workshops, meant that much volunteer time and energy was taken up with finding places to be able to do our work, meaning that less events and workshops happened. This year, we didn't have the facilities and capacity to run an Autumn Seed Swap, but our Spring one was a bonanza of seediness! Although we didn't have a home base for activities in the first half of the year, we did enjoy doing some activities at various locations including Southern Harvest Farmers Market, who also hosted our May Seedy Saturday.

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 to 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 who helped to make our events successful and fun!

Spring Seed Swap

Canberra Environment Centre kindly hosted us for our Spring Seed Swap in August this year at their new location at Gungaharra Homestead, and once again it was a hugely popular event. More than 100 people donated, swapped and bought seeds ranging from amaranth to zucchini, and we had 17 new members joined the Cooperative. A wonderful group of volunteers made it all work by setting up and packing down, helping people to find and buy seeds, taking memberships and seed donations. Seed Swaps are a very important part of our work to distribute locally grown seeds to the Canberra community - and also a fun day!



Seedy Saturdays & Workshops

This year, we had to skip a couple of Seedy Saturdays but those we held were a lot of fun! In May, we enjoyed the sunshine at Bungendore Farmers Markets for a Seedy Saturday with a difference. In June, we stayed warm in the Food Coop Shop and Cafe as we winnowed and packed seeds, including lots of donated native seeds. In September, our Seedy Saturday was hosted by Holy Cross Church in Hackett where we had a great time winnowing up a storm and checking out CSS member Joh's community garden!

Workshops run this year included an Introduction to Seed Saving at the CEC, and Growing a Garden for Generations Workshop in Whitlam for the ACT Heritage Festival.

As well as running our own events and workshops, we love joining other organisations to celebrate our fabulous Canberra community. Throughout the year we attend markets, festivals and open days to build community connections and to spread the seedy love. This year we were part of many festival events in spring, enjoying great sunshine and community spirit!

Here are some of the community events that CSS attended this year.

- Pearce Community Markets, Pearce
- Bungendore Harvest Festival Markets (with Southern Harvest Association)
- Bungendore Farmers Markets (with Southern Harvest Association)
- Dickson COGS Open Day, Canberra Organic Growers Society
- Kambah COGS Open Day, Canberra Organic Growers Society
- Lanyon Homestead Festival
- Curtin Neighbourhood Festival
- Tuggeranong Living Well and Sustainability Festival
- Canberra City Farm Open Day
- Cranleigh School Fete

In 2023 we were able to invest in some new equipment for our market stalls (see details in Resources), which helped make everything run more smoothly. We were also joined by more volunteers at events this year, meaning we could have even more great conversations with our community about the importance of seeds, and how to grow and save seeds.



VIII. RESOURCES

2021-22 Technology Upgrade Fund Grant Program

CSS received \$3220 from this ACT Government grant. The funds were approved to purchase administrative equipment, create educational content and redesign our website.

Items purchased:

- Laptop
- Portable Bluetooth meeting microphone/speaker
- Microsoft Office Home and student system
- Ring light kit
- Lapel mic

Investment in our mobile outreach

Due to increased requests from the community to attend markets and events it was decided by the board to invest in equipment. We had financial security to purchase quality tailor-made items, including using our logos.

Items purchased:

- 1x 3mx3m white marquee with our logo (Australian-made, Quikshade Australia)
- 2x tablecloths with our logo (Australian-made, Quikshade Australia)
- 2x foldable tables
- 2x foldable trolleys
- 3x stamps
 - our logo
 - OSSI Pledge (to be used on OSSI seeds, such as some dwarf varieties. You can see the OSSI Pledge on p14 of this report)
 - donation stamp (to record detailed info for seed donations, including variety, grower, suburb grown, harvest date, if hand pollinated, if treated, etc)





IX. CIVIL INVOLVEMENT

in October 2023, Canberra Seed Savers put forward the following submission to the Draft ACT Region Local Food Strategy 2023-2028. Arian and Joh also met with representatives of the Directorate of Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development to discuss the work of CSS and advocate for stronger focus on seeds and seed saving as part of the Local Food Strategy. This followed on from previous advocacy and submissions during the development of the draft strategy. Below is some wording from the Submission - for full text, please see our website.

Canberra Seed Savers applauds ACT Government for the production of the Draft Local Food Strategy (the Strategy). We are excited about this important work, and particularly about the strong themes of localisation, equity and community. We see opportunities for building on the work already being done by so many local producers and community organisations to create a thriving, vibrant and productive local food system that is able to meet the needs of Canberrans while also helping to reduce our collective carbon impact.

We are also disappointed that the Strategy emphasises engagement with, and support of, non-local organisations such as Grow It Local in preference to supporting local organisations which are currently trying to do the same work.

We strongly encourage ACT Government to connect with, and work with, the rich ecosystem of local food-related organisations to identify opportunities to strengthen existing work that is being done by local people, cooperatively, in our Canberra community. We are delighted with the intentions expressed by Minister Vassarotti's Introduction to the Strategy to do exactly that.

Canberra Seed Savers is in support of the motion recently brought by Andrew Braddock MLA in the ACT Legislative Assembly to promote the use of under-utilised public land for urban agriculture purposes, especially for incubator farm programs and associated urban farmer training programs including seed saving education and community events.

We are particularly keen to be part of helping to create and activate local food hubs and local food infrastructure for both production/ distribution and also education. Government investment in infrastructure to support the development of local agriculture which provides good livelihoods and regenerates and protects our natural environment is crucial and urgent. We echo the calls from many for accommodation and facilities for community groups and representative associations that provide security of tenure, the opportunity to strengthen networks and to work cooperatively to strengthen the local food movement.

In our submission we seek to:

- Provide a brief overview of Canberra Seed Savers, our mission and projects and programs;
- Provide feedback on some key aspects of the Strategy; and
- Highlight some of the activities that Canberra Seed Savers is currently engaged in that position us well to be involved in developing implementation plans to support this strategy.



X. 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.