



Extension Notes

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HORTICULTURE

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Introducing the Lake Cumberland Seed Lending Library

Seed saving used to mean the difference between eating and starving to death. Everyone knew how to do it and adults were sure to pass along this knowledge to their children.

These pass-along seeds (aka heirloom or open-pollinated) would produce plants just like the plants from which the seed was gathered. We call that coming back ‘true-to-type’.

Nowadays, with so many seed companies all over the US, we can buy our seed each year instead of collecting and saving our own. And every year we do this, we keep forgetting, a little more each year, how our ancestors used to survive by being seed savers.

Many people ask ‘Why save seeds?’ Here’s why:

- To increase biodiversity and capitalize on different traits in different strains of the seed. We have lost a lot of biodiversity over the last 100 years. The FAO estimates that since the turn of the 20th century, we’ve lost 75% of the biodiversity in seeds.
- To develop seed stock that is more robust and tough, able to adapt to our local climate and soils. Seeds should be saved from our plants that have the best traits, not the ones that didn’t produce well or had disease problems.
- To perpetuate the knowledge and culture of seed saving. This makes us resilient in the face of future crises or catastrophes.
- To reconnect people to their local food systems. Many kids think food comes from the grocery store. Reconnect your family to the plants that provide food and fiber for us.
- To provide seed to others in the community. We who have can always give away a few seeds to those in need. And in turn, those less fortunate have been given a gift that will keep giving.

The Lake Cumberland Master Gardeners have created the Lake Cumberland Seed Lending Library. It is housed at the Pulaski County Cooperative Extension Service office and will officially open March 1.

Anyone in the community can come in and get free heirloom seeds. Participants will be expected to return a few seeds back at the end of the growing season.

A binder listing the seeds available will be in the office for you to browse through. Seeds will be categorized into 'easy' and 'hard' based on how hard it is to save seed from them (not how hard they are to grow).

If you're new to seed-saving, we suggest getting seeds from the easy category. However, those of you who want a challenge can try some seeds from the hard category.

For more information, call the Pulaski County Extension office at 679-6361. There will be a page on the Pulaski County Cooperative Extension Service website with more information as well. It will be under the 'Horticulture' tab.

Like [Pulaski County Horticulture](#) on Facebook, follow [@hortagentbeth](#) on Twitter, and kyplants on Instagram. If you want to have text reminders sent to your phone about upcoming horticulture programming at the Pulaski County Extension Service, text '@gardenerst' to 81010 (do not include the quotation marks).

There will also be a class on Carrots, Radishes, and Beets on February 27 at 6pm at the Pulaski Co Extension office. Participants will take home a number of seeds. \$5 fee.

There are still a few spots available for the Growing Mushrooms on Logs Workshop on March 6, 6pm, Pulaski Co Extension office. Participants will inoculate a log with mushroom spawn and get to take it home. Fee is \$15.

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There is so much diversity in a plant like tomatoes. We need to become better plants observers and notice good mutations that keep improving plants for our local conditions.