

Growing a Seed Library in your Community

Long Island Library Conference - May 11, 2023



Bayard Cutting Arboretum - April 27, 2023

**Presented by: Regina Dlugokencky, Seedsower Farm, LLC
Amber Gagliardi, Middle Country Public Library**

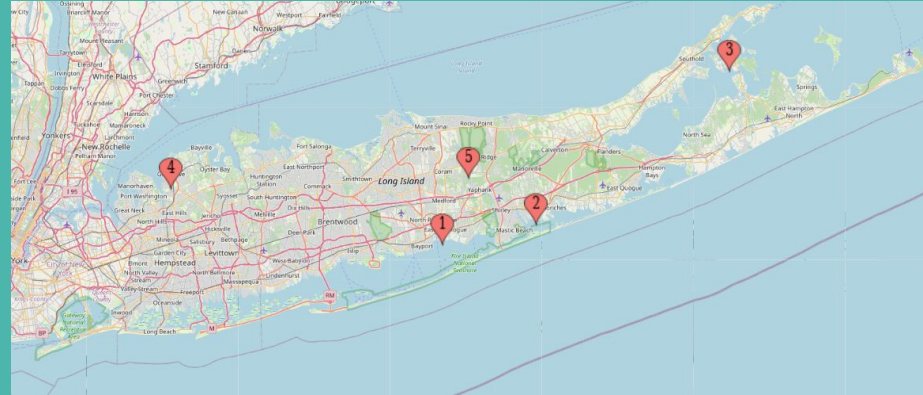
Seed Libraries on Long Island

Currently more than 55 active Seed Libraries on Long Island in Public Libraries.

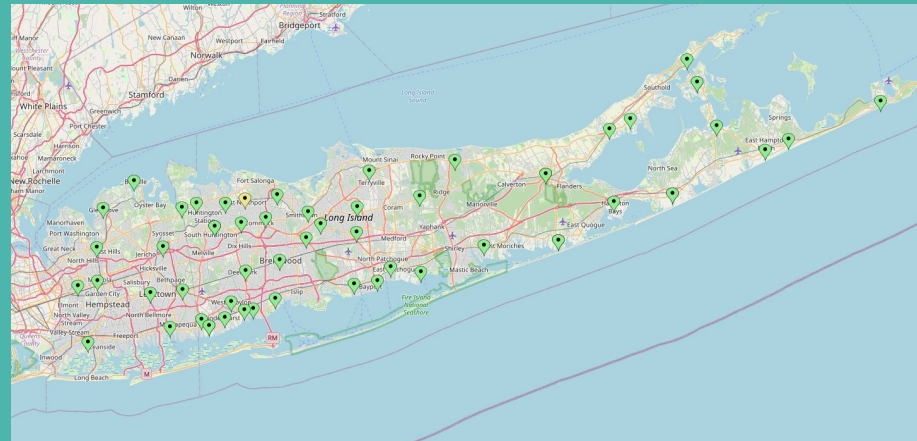
Seed Libraries of Long Island



Pre-2018



Current - May 2023



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Local News Coverage

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YOUR EYE ON LI

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FEW SHOWERS



Elizabeth Carpio, left, Gracia Soris and mom Gabrielle Soris, Brielle Gouger and Jovanna Contreras prepare painted jars for planting seeds at the East Hampton Library. The kids will sow milkweed, which is the only plant that endangered Monarch butterfly larvae eat. The Seed Libraries of Long Island promotes giveaways of pollinator seed packets.

THE NEED FOR SEEDS

Libraries help fill LI gardens and care for the environment — for free

BY ELLEN
SPELLEN/Newsday

It's the last summer's memories of growing Chinese long beans the length of her arms, Khadija Mason trekked back to the place where she grows plenty of free seeds — the Uniondale Public Library.

"It's an awesome opportunity," says Mason, 45, a local teacher of three, whose family picked out walking stick kale, white marigolds, moon and stars watermelon and more in their latest trip. "A couple times there even had small plants you can take home to get

you started and get you excited. It had the look, line and stripes."

So called "seed libraries" have sprouted across Long Island as part of an organic movement toward sustainability, powered by librarians watching the decline of pollinator species and responding to parent's desire for self-sufficiency. About half the island's 300-plus public libraries have the seed program, with a large number launched in the past year or so. Seeds are purchased or donated in bulk.

The variety of fruit, flower and veggie seeds at libraries can be overwhelming, with a few of 20 in Uniondale, for example, and more than 75 at Middle

Country. There's not just the dry black seeds that look like flea dirt and grow into basil. There are Persian carpet zinnias, fig trees, dragon tongue look beans, Long Island cheese squash, yellow wendy wild strawberries and Hampton Public Library, which is in its third season of giving out free seeds. "When I think about the library's place in the community, it's a community center at the end of the day, so it's like how else can we function for the community? People want to garden, people want to grow their own food, and it's not like that we're searching for them."

WHAT'S DRIVING THE INTEREST IN SEED LIBRARIES?

The rich has been driven by two main forces, librarians say. During the pandemic, people were looking to limit trips to the grocery store and the shelves weren't always stocked. On top of that, rising prices have pushed people to look for food savings.

Seed libraries have blossomed fast. Some libraries, for example, hosted more than 270 patrons leaving with 3,000 packets in the past two months, up from 340 taking 4,000 packets for all of last year.

Most libraries set limits on free seed packets and reserve them for local residents, the one-paying library budgeter. A few allow everyone to peruse, including Middle Country and East Hampton.



Khadija Mason, left, and her daughters Corie, 14, and Jessie, 12, get seed packets from Syntychia Kendrick-Samuel, assistant director at the Uniondale library.



The variety of tomato seeds that are available at the Uniondale Public Library.

Some feature twists to their seed libraries — tomato-mania, native species, heirloom seeds and seed exchanges, in which seed library users return with seeds from their plants.

But the biggest plot at the libraries may be the struggle to save pollinators. With bees decimated by disease and the monarch butterfly listed as endangered, members of the Seed Libraries of Long Island promoted giveaways of pollinator seed packets containing milkweed — the only plant that monarch larvae will eat — and other plants that feed insects and birds. Seed Libraries of Long Island was founded by Amber Gagliardi, who started the Middle Country seed library in 2018.

HOW DO SEED LIBRARIES HELP THE ENVIRONMENT?

Pollinator packets are among the most requested at West Babylon, says Jessica Giannetti-Rice, the adult

programming coordinator at the library, which also raises Monarchs from the caterpillar stage and releases them into the library garden as butterflies.

"We need these pollinators," Giannetti-Rice says. "Without them, we wouldn't have flowers and we wouldn't have vegetables. I don't know how we would sustain ourselves as a society."

The seeds have given libraries a chance to show they're more than just books.

East Rockaway patrons have learned about container gardens, a seed library focus due to concerns about soil contaminated during Superstorm Sandy and homes that don't have large yards, says Heather Massa, who is in charge of adult programs there.

The seeds brought in library newcomers, she says: "This is an opportunity for other people who aren't into books to come join and say, 'Hey, I grew these tomatoes' and they're able to help us figure out what they might want to see next" in library programs.

Almost like gardening outposts, the libraries have grown seed-to-supply support systems, including giving advice by phone. Some partner with gardening clubs, seed companies, nurseries and the Cornell Cooperative Extension. Patrons can attend workshops on building tabletop greenhouses, drying seeds, making healthy soil and even growing a "pizza garden" in East Hampton.

"I see libraries as being able to be stewards of seeds," says Gagliardi. "The public gets it. People know it's a good idea to grow their own food."

ON THE COVER Jessica Giannetti-Rice, the adult programming coordinator at the West Babylon Library, helps manage the library's "seed library."

Benefits of Seed Saving+Seed Libraries

There are many reasons to save seeds, here are just a few of the [40 reasons](#) listed at [Seedsavers Exchange](#)

- Preserve and increase genetic diversity
- Increase self-reliance
- Adapt varieties to your local climate
- Strengthen cultural history
- Grow local food systems
- Participate in an Ancient Tradition
- Adapt + Increase variety resilience to:
 - a. climatic events
 - b. invasive pests
 - c. seed shortages
- Protect + Preserve Pollinators



Why, What, When + How to Start a Seed Library

Why: Community Engagement + Outreach

What: Choose Open Pollinated Seeds

When: Anytime! (Winter/Spring is best)

How: *Start small*, but Start!

- **Space + Storage Considerations**
 - Cool/Dry/Dark
- **Record keeping**
 - Record of Seed Information
 - What to keep and how long
 - [Viability Charts](#)
 - Member Information



Use restraint!

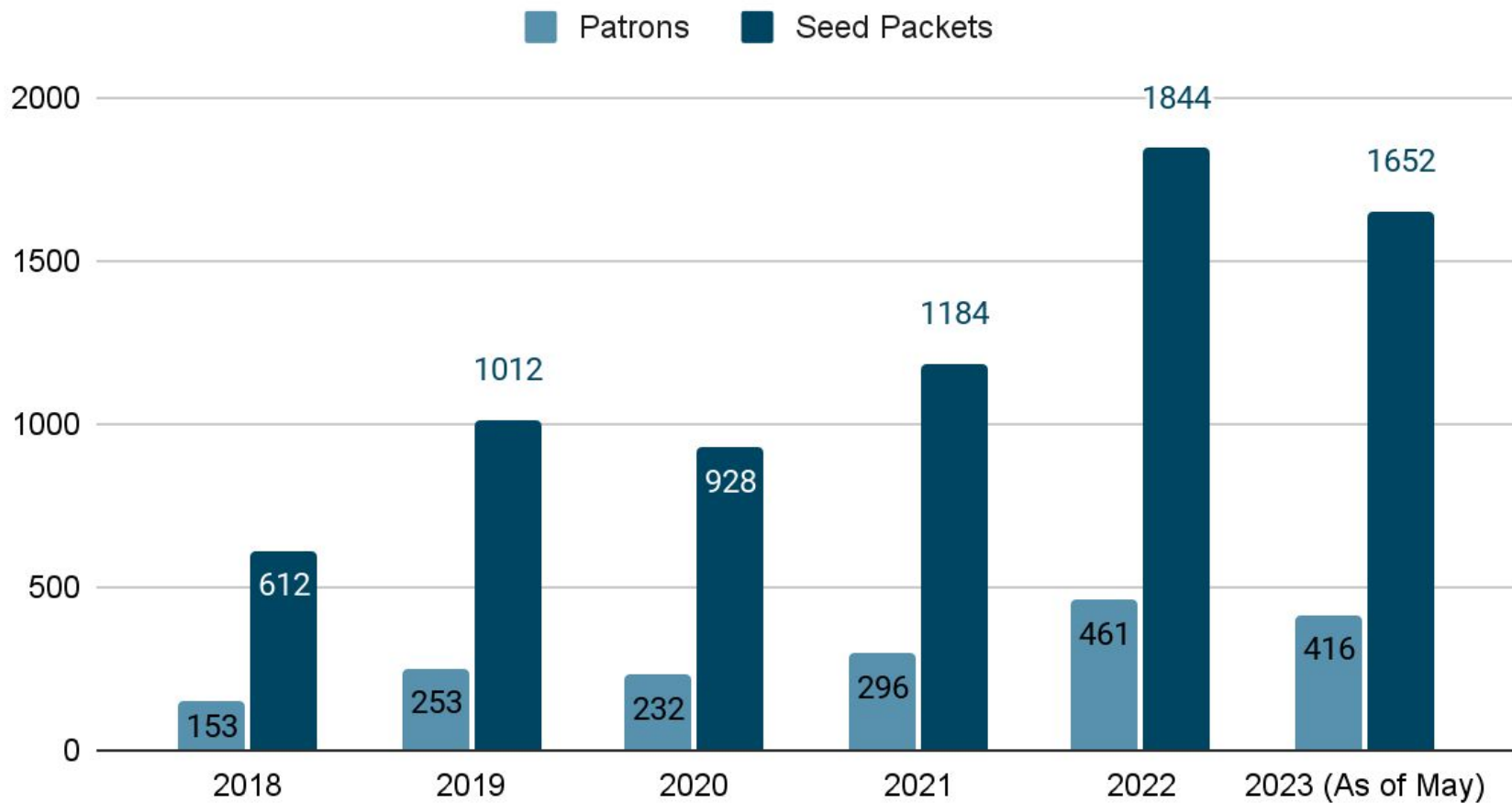
What are the first steps in starting a seed library?



- Gauge interest
- Research and read books on seed saving
- Reach out to other librarians! **Google Group**
- Partner with farmers, gardeners and cooperative extension in your community
- Determine your budget
- Write a program proposal (vision, timeline, name, supplies, possible partnerships and plan for promotion)
- Set realistic goals



MCPL Seed Library Growth



Obtaining Seeds

- **Purchasing in bulk**
 - **Host a seed packaging party**
 - **Community Service credit for teens**
- **Partnering with local farms, gardening clubs, nonprofits (ReWild) or food banks (Island Harvest).**
- **Solicit Donations**
 - **Seed Donations**
 - **Seed Saver Exchange, Fedco, Sow True Seed, Johnny's Select Seeds, Hudson Valley Seed Co**
 - **Monetary Donation**
 - **Landscaping Company**
 - **Friend's Group**
 - **Grants**
 - **Community Seed Donations (Caveats + Considerations)**



Planting seeds

Emerald Magic Lawn Care, owned by Craig den Hartog (photo, left), planter of Old Town Blooms of Hellsville, has awarded a \$300 sponsorship to support the new MCPCL Seed Library. Patrons may check out four packets of seeds per

month from Middle Country Public Library's selection of 100 percent organic, GMO-free vegetable, herb and flower seeds. Visit www.mcplibrary.org/seed-library for more information.



Seed Savers
EXCHANGE®

 **HUDSON VALLEY SEED CO**

Seed Purchasing Considerations

Choose

- Open Pollinated Varieties
- Appealing Qualities
- Heirloom/Rare
- Regional varieties
- Easy to save varieties
- **Bulk availability**



Poona Kheera Cucumber



Pinwheel Marigold

Ordering Guidelines: Seed Saving Considerations

All seeds are easy to grow...

Super Easy (beginners)

- **bean**
- lettuce
- tomato
- pea
- pepper (hot or sweet)
- marigolds
- sunflowers

Easy (some experience)

- corn
- cucumber
- melon
- radish
- spinach
- **squash/pumpkin**
(when growing 1 variety only)

Difficult (experts)

- **beet/swiss chard**
- cabbage
- carrot
- cauliflower
- escarole/frisee
- kale
- onion
- radicchio/endive
- turnip/chinese cabbage

Growing Interest-Gardening Program Ideas

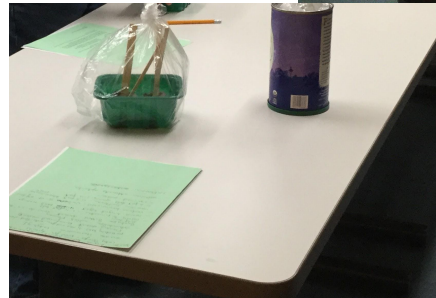
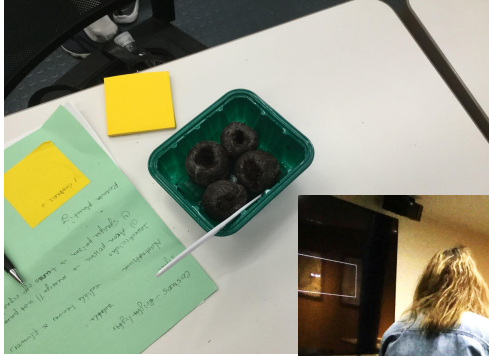
Season	Month(s)	Program Suggestions	Budget Level
Winter-Early Spring	January - March	Film focusing on sustainability, pollinators, planet	low-mid
	January - March	Organic Gardening 101	mid
	January - March	Seed starting: Early Season Plants (Peas, Potatoes + Greens)	mid
	January - March	Seed Packaging Party/Seed Swap/Seed Library Sign up	low
	January -March	Garden Design 101	low-mid
Late Spring- Mid Summer	April	Seed Starting: Warm Season plants (Tomatoes, Peppers, Eggplants)	low-mid
	May - June	Flowers in the Garden (attracting & supporting Pollinators)	low-mid
	Ma- June	Small Space, Vertical + Container Gardening	low-mid
	June	Insect Identification	low-mid
	July- August	Seed starting: Late season plants (Spring plants redux)	low-mid
Late Summer - Fall	August - September	Growing Garlic 101	low-mid
	September - October	Compost 101/Putting your Garden to Bed	low-mid
	September - October	Native Plants 101	low-mid
	September - October	Seed starting: Planting for Pollinators	low-mid
	September - October	Seed Saving 101 + Seed Cleaning	low-mid

Seed Packaging Party



*

Grow your Own! Seed Starting Workshop - April 2019



Tomato Tasting, August 2018



Garlic Planting, November 2017





**Hobbs Farms, Farm to Table
Smoothies & Salads**

Outdoor Programs

Gardening Related Crafts



Wood Burning on Planter Markers

Pressed Flowers on
Pendants and Keychains



Iron on Aprons

Take & Grow Programs

A Take & Grow Program Grow Your Own: Pizza Garden

Grow your own fresh ingredients needed to make a delicious homemade pizza.



Friday, November 4, 2022 at 11am
watched an instructional pre-recorded video via
MCPL.TV (MCPL YouTube)

Kit Includes:

- Riesentraube Tomato Seeds
- Miniature Red Bell Pepper Seeds
- Genovese Basil Seeds
- Chives
- Peat Pellets (5)
- Wooden Garden Stakes (5)
- Glass Jar

You Need:

- Water
- Tray or Dish (*To put peat pellets in*)
- Grow Light (Optional) or very sunny warm spot indoors.

A initiative of the MCPL Seed Library. Additional seeds are available for pickup any time the library is open. Visit our website for details: <https://www.mcplibrary.org/adults>

A Take & Grow Program

Grow Your Own: Taco Garden

Grow your own fresh ingredients needed to make a delicious Taco Garden.



Kit Includes:

- Brandywine Tomato Seeds
- Jalapeno Pepper Seeds
- Red Ruby Onion Seeds
- Cilantro
- Peat Pellets (10)
- Wooden Garden Stakes (5)
- Glass Jar

You Need:

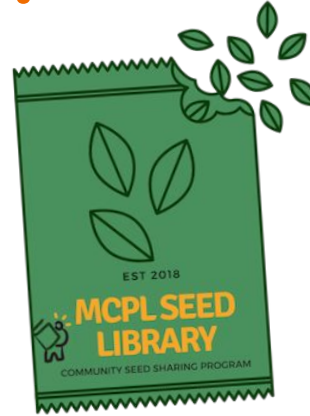
- Water
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A initiative of the MCPL Seed Library. Additional seeds are available for pickup any time the library is open. Visit our website for more details: <https://www.mcplibrary.org/adults/seed-library>

- Grow your Own: Taco Garden
- Herb Garden Starter Kit
- Nasturtium and Pumpkins
- Fall is for Planting Bulbs! Bulb Starting Program
- All About Garlic: Planting, Harvesting + Curing
- Seed Starting Kit

Promoting your Seed Library!

- **Branding**
 - Name, Logo, Colors Scheme
- **Visible Space on Public Floor**
- **Webpage**
- **Promotional Materials/Outreach**
 - Brochure & Bookmarks
- **Catalog/Newsletter (Spring!)**
- **Develop a #hashtag #mcplseedlibrary**
- **#LISeedLibraries**
 - Use other hashtags to connect to other seed libraries
#seedlibrariesoflongisland #seedlibrary
- **Email Newsletters with Timely Articles**



Helpful Resources

Live-brary https://suffolktopicguides.org/seed_saving

Seed Savers Exchange <https://www.seedsavers.org/learn>

Organic Seed Alliance

<https://seedalliance.org/publications/seed-saving-guide-gardeners-farmers/>

Richmond Grows

<http://www.richmondgrowsseeds.org/seed-saving.html>

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Sister Seed Libraries

Seedlibraries.weebly.com

Pollinator Pathways:

<https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/>

Live-brary.com

PUBLIC LIBRARIES of Suffolk County, NY

Public Libraries of Suffolk County, NY / LibGuides / Seed Saving and Seed Libraries / Seed Saving-An Introduction

Seed Saving and Seed Libraries: Seed Saving-An Introduction

Search this Guide

Search

Seed saving is an important tradition that encourages self-reliance, brings communities together, preserves valuable heirloom varieties, and helps to identify and stimulate the development of locally adapted varieties.

[Seed Saving-An Introduction](#)

[How to Save Seeds](#)

[Multimedia Resources](#)

[Planning for Success!](#)

Online Resources for Seed Savers



Resources on seed saving abound...here are a few to get you started!

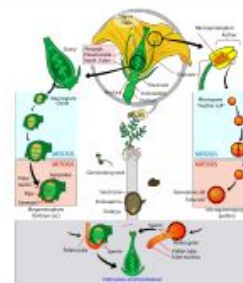
- [How to Save Heirloom Tomato Seeds](#)
- [Mother Earth Living-Seed Saving 101](#)
Preserve your harvest from year to year with these easy seed-saving basics.
- [Rodale's Organic Life Beginners Guide to Saving Seed](#)
Everything you need to know to get a repeat performance of your favorite edibles next year without ever buying new seeds again.
- [Seed Saving Glossary](#)
- [Why Save Seeds?](#)

The Why, What, + How of Saving Seeds

Why Save Seeds?



The Language of Seed Saving



Like any new world, including the world of seedsaving, it helps to learn the lingo!

Some basic terminology for starters...Definitions courtesy of the International Seed Saving Institute and Seedsavers Exchange.

There is much more to learn and more can be found at the following sites:

[International Seed Saving Institute](#)

[Seedsavers Exchange](#)

Annual-a plant that completes its full life cycle—including germination,

Library Services



Find books and programs on seed saving.

Search the library catalog for films on seeds and seed saving.

Great Books for Beginner Seed Savers!



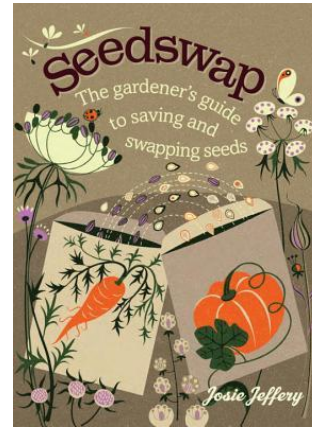
Saving: A Beginner's Guide to Heirloom Gardening by Caleb Warnock.



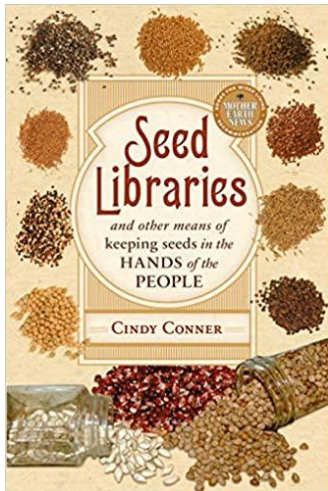
Books on Seed Saving - Our Favorites!



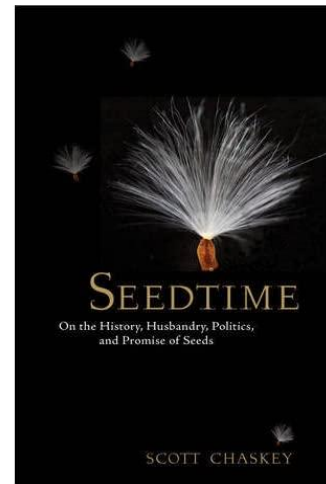
The complete guide to saving seeds: 322 vegetables, herbs, flowers, fruits, trees, and shrubs by Robert E. Gough



Seedswap: The gardener's guide to saving and swapping seeds by Josie Jeffery



Seed Libraries: And Other Means of Keeping Seeds in the Hands of the People by Cindy Connor



Seedtime: on the history, husbandry, politics, and promise of seeds by Scott Chaskey



Smith Point Beach,
Long Island

Questions & Comments



Contact Us:

Amber Gagliardi,

gagliardiamber@mcplibrary.org

Regina Dlugokencky,

tashatu@gmail.com

Link to Presentation Slides



**Seed is not just the source of life.
It is the very foundation of our being."**

~Vandana Shiva