

EXPLORING OPEN POLLINATED AND LOCAL SEEDS: A VIRTUAL DISCUSSION SERIES FOR MARKET FARMERS

INTRODUCTION

Open pollinated seeds (OPs) form the foundation of seed saving and underwrite the great diversity of agricultural crop varieties we benefit from today. What they may lack in hybrid vigour they make up for in flavour, uniqueness, versatility, and resilience. Local OPs— especially when produced in ecological systems— may carry especially useful traits that address regional climatic challenges. OP seeds can be adapted, saved, and shared by farmers, keeping seed diversity in the hands of growers.

The resources listed here offer a deep dive into “the why” of OP and regionally produced seed. They are designed for aspiring or established market growers who are looking for alternatives to hybrid or commodity seed, or who are interested in beginning a practice of on-farm seed saving.

RESOURCE LIST

SEEDS: BREEDING AND ADAPTATION

QUICK READ!

- “Modern seeds aren’t ready for climate change”, 2024, Gund Institute for the Environment. <https://www.uvm.edu/gund/news/modern-seeds-arent-ready-climate-change>

HIGHLIGHTED RESOURCE

“Why open-pollinated and diverse seeds?”, 2025. (Video run time: 47:01 minutes)
Mary Brittain (Ontario). <https://youtu.be/-0N9WQ0nZFU>

- “The adaptive power of OP seeds”, 2025. (Video run time: 25:10 minutes)
Lorna McMaster (New Brunswick). <https://youtu.be/xLilkkbrhoE>
- “Building climate resilient seed systems in Canada”, SeedChange, 2024. <https://weseedchange.org/publications/resilient-seed/>. Selected case studies:
 - [Joan rutabaga](#)
 - [Paydon acorn squash](#)

IN DEPTH RESOURCE

QUICK READ!

- “Seeding climate resilience: Farming in a changing climate on Vancouver Island”, 2018. (Video run time: 4 minutes). Climate Atlas of Canada. climateatlas.ca/video/seeding-climate-resilience

THE SEED INDUSTRY

HIGHLIGHTED RESOURCE

“Seed Diversity in Canada”, 2020. (Video run time: 9:38 minutes).
Bob Wildfong, Seeds of Diversity (Ontario). <https://youtu.be/UDSe6yJ7XpY>

QUICK READ!

- “Where does your vegetable seed come from?”, SeedChange, 2021.
<https://weseedchange.org/where-does-your-vegetable-seed-come-from/>

IN DEPTH RESOURCE

- “State of organic seed”, Organic Seed Alliance, 2022.
stateoforganicseed.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/OSA-2022StateofOrganicSeed-04.pdf
- “The seed industry: Scaling seed security”, 2020. (Video run time: 8:05 minutes).
Heron Breen, Kim Delaney, Paul Betz, and Adrienne Shelton. <https://youtu.be/cZNf9XseosU>
- “The seed industry: A brief history of the seed trade in the Northeast”, 2020. (Video run time: 16:20 minutes) Heron Breen. <https://youtu.be/ry9RFFriskQ>
- “When biotech comes to your garden”, 2026. (Podcast run time: 26:21)
Dan Brisebois’ *The Seed Farmer Podcast*, episode 54 with Lucy Sharratt.
<https://danbrisebois.com/the-seed-growers-podcast/>

INTEGRATING SEED SAVING ONTO THE FARM

HIGHLIGHTED RESOURCE

“Challenges and opportunities of on-farm seed production”, 2020.
(Video run time: 11:58 minutes). Angie Koch (Ontario). <https://youtu.be/RzUGc7rLA7o>

- “Integrating seed production onto Broadfork Farm”, 2025. (Video run time: 26:57 minutes)
Shannon Jones (Nova Scotia). https://youtu.be/8pl_R-xJBOM
- “Why I save seed”, 2025. (Video run time: 20:56 minutes)
Annie Ferguson (Nova Scotia). <https://youtu.be/xANNI5RW0hk>
- “Plan to save seed in your market garden”, 2022. (Video run time: 1 hour 4 minutes).
Dan Brisebois’ Spreadsheet Academy. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TidIIQjUm3U>

IN DEPTH RESOURCE

QUICK READ!

- “Seed production for market growers” Kitt Healy, Nathaniel Talbot, Annie Jespersen, Crystal Stewart-Courtens, Eric Kampe, Green Things Farm Collective. Organic Seed Conference Proceedings, 2022, pages 57-59.
<https://seedalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-OSGC-Proceedings-Final-1.pdf>
- “The seed industry: Contract growing”. (Video run time: 7:33 minutes)
Heron Breen, Kim Delaney, Paul Betz, and Adrienne Shelton. <https://youtu.be/ngmAigGpqKw>

SEED SOURCING RESOURCES

INTERACTIVE RESOURCE

- The Ecological SeedFinder: seeds.ca/seedfinder, by Seeds of Diversity
- “Where to find local vegetable seeds in Canada”, SeedChange, 2025.
This article includes links to several regional directories.
<https://weseedchange.org/local-seeds/>

RECOMMENDED SEED CROP PRODUCTION AND PLANT BREEDING TEXTS

HIGHLIGHTED RESOURCE FOR BEGINNER SEED SAVERS

How to Save your own Seeds, Seeds of Diversity, 2010. <https://seeds.ca/books/>

- Breed your own Vegetable Varieties, Carol Deppe, 2000.
https://www.chelseagreen.com/product/breed-your-own-vegetable-varieties/?srsltid=AfmBOoo_uMk8SWrQC4SiZgj5mXH2mXZ5quqTPfbxgyft2Atc5Lj-yfkl
- The Seed Farmer, Dan Brisebois, 2024. <https://danbrisebois.com/seedfarmerbook/>
- The Organic Seed Grower, John Navazio, 2021.
https://www.chelseagreen.com/product/the-organic-seed-grower-paperback/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=20956811929&gbraid=0AAAAAD-HT7TrEfgU4o2O_Vy5B7UHnpNCe&gclid=CjwKCAiAzZ_NBhAEEiwAMtqKy-cHBQqK-3Lyvts6YocS8kaysZaG26H00csFMble28jw4fMhE7PilRoCYjYQAvD_BwE

