



# Seeds of Diversity Handbook

## for Organizing a Seedy Saturday or Sunday Event

This handbook is meant to be a starting point for any prospective Seedy Saturday/Sunday organizer to gather initial information about how to run an event, including some important steps and things to consider.

Please know that this handbook is just the beginning! Join Seeds of Diversity's email list to be included in opportunities for planning sessions, materials and resources, and other support throughout the season. Send us an email to be added: [seedysaturdays@seeds.ca](mailto:seedysaturdays@seeds.ca)

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# INTRODUCTION

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Seedy Saturdays are a remarkable phenomenon. They are not one event, but a series of separate events, which have sprung up across the country, each individually and uniquely organized under the same general themes of encouraging the use of open-pollinated and heritage seeds, enabling a local seed exchange, and educating the public about seed saving and environmentally responsible gardening practices.

What makes a Seedy Saturday (or Sunday or anyday)?

- Focus on heritage seeds and garden-related knowledge sharing
- Inclusion of a community seed exchange
- Non-profit, community-based event
- Low or no cost for entry

Seedy Saturdays have mainly been organized by individuals and community groups who see a need for gardeners, vendors and organizations to have a low-cost local venue where they can learn from one another, exchange ideas and seeds, and purchase seeds and plants. Gardeners, seed companies, nurseries, gardening organizations, historic sites, and community groups have banded together of their own volition to represent themselves under the umbrella of this unique educational and promotional vehicle, not for the commercial benefit of any one company, group or individual, but for the benefit of all participants: visitors, vendors and exhibitors alike.

Each Seedy Saturday event is different, because each grows from the effort and ideas of local volunteers. This diversity allows Seedy Saturdays to make the best use of local resources, tailor to regional interests and meet the needs of local audiences. Canada is a diverse country: every Seedy Saturday deserves to be different.

## **Who can Host a Seedy Saturday?**

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Anyone and everyone! Seedy Saturdays have been hosted by individuals, volunteer committees, established public sites, churches, gardening groups, non-profit organizations, farmers, and others. Seeds of Diversity does not organize or host individual events, but helps with event promotions and supports local organizers in a variety of ways.

## The Role of Seeds of Diversity

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Our role in Seedy Saturdays is to:

- promote events across the country and help coordinate dates
- participate as an exhibitor when invited and when a volunteer or staff member is available
- offer seed packets for event Seed Exchange tables
- produce and offer virtual presentations on food and gardening issues for event use ([the Seedy Saturday Speaker Series](#))
- host planning sessions through Zoom for organizers to get together (virtually) and discuss challenges, solutions, innovations, and resources
- provide educational and support materials: please visit the [For Volunteers](#) page
- offer advice and contacts for new organizers

As a non-profit food organization, Seeds of Diversity is pleased to participate as a regular exhibitor at Seedy Saturdays, providing that we can locate volunteers to represent us.



Seedy Sunday volunteer in Nanaimo, 2024

## PLANNING YOUR SEEDY SATURDAY

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### Forming a Committee

First, identify the various groups in your area who work with seeds. These can include university plant or pollinator scientists, members of Seeds of Diversity, botanical groups, local organic groups, local wildflower societies, local seed companies who sell open-pollinated varieties, historic museums with heritage gardens, local seed-savers, garden clubs, and so on. Find out who the contact people are, and ask if they would help organize an event. If not, ask them to come as an exhibitor or speaker.

Once you have a group to help, divide the jobs - examples include: advertising and promotion, food, education, volunteer coordinator, etc.

Some committees meet quite regularly for months leading up to the event, the others divide tasks and work more independently. In any case, make sure everyone is clear on the budget and have agreed on the tasks and timelines necessary to pull the event off smoothly.

### Setting a Budget

*Appendix C* features a sample treasurer's report with some common sources of revenue and expenses

### Choosing a Date

Most Seedy Saturdays are held January - April, giving seed savers time to process and package their seeds from the previous year, but before gardeners need to start seeds for the upcoming growing season.

A few things to consider:

- Coordinate date scheduling with other Seedy Saturdays in your region so vendors don't have to choose between events to attend (some vendors will travel >500km for a larger event at which they could have sales). Check events at [www.seeds.ca/events](http://www.seeds.ca/events). You can also reach out to us for assistance with knowing about other events' plans before they're posted: [seedysaturdays@seeds.ca](mailto:seedysaturdays@seeds.ca)
- Do you want to include seedling vendors? If so, a later date may work better.
- In many Canadian climate zones, some seeds need to be started indoors by February or March so earlier dates will better accommodate seed sales and swaps.
- Watch out for Easter, March Break, or conflicting events in your community.

## Choosing a Venue

Some smaller communities try to link their Seedy Saturday with a location such as a library or farmer's market, which brings people out. Others choose locations because they are free, pleasant, a good size, or centrally located. Often organizers have co-sponsors who own a hall which becomes a natural venue for the event.

A few considerations in selecting a venue:

- Cost
- Size and number of rooms for exhibitors, presentations and other activities
- Access to public transit and parking facilities
- Availability of tables, chairs and A/V equipment

## Promotions

A mix of social media, posters and cross-promotions with your partners and vendors will probably be necessary to get the word out about your event – especially until it's fairly established. Here are a few ideas of ways to advertise:

### Social Media & Online Promotions

- Use Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and other social media platforms: our Instagram name is [@seedsdiversity](#); our Facebook name is [Seeds of Diversity Canada](#)
- Encourage vendors and exhibitors to promote through their social media
- Let Seeds of Diversity know ([seedysaturdays@seeds.ca](mailto:seedysaturdays@seeds.ca)) and we'll get you on our [events listing](#)
- Have community partners and local events listings advertise on their websites

### Posters

- Post at libraries, farmers markets, grocery stores with community bulletin boards, local businesses, local garden-related events etc
- Give vendors & exhibitors posters to help with promotions at other events they attend

### Traditional Media

- Write a press release for your local media
- Contact your local TV & radio stations for on-the-day coverage or pre-event interviews
- Use community newspaper event listings (often free)

In developing your promotions, include the following information: date; time; location; names/logos of all organizing partners; types of vendors; seed swap – encouragement & requirements to get involved; any workshops/presentations being offered; cost/suggested donation.

## RUNNING YOUR EVENT

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### Seed Exchange Table

This is really the heart of a Seedy Saturday event. The exchange facilitates the trading or purchasing (for a minimal donation) of seeds saved by local community members. Most organizers have found that their seed swap areas – even if completely unsupervised – are rarely abused. That said, having a volunteer or two at the table can greatly help improve its organization!

Some Seed Swap tips:

- Get the word out ahead of time that seeds should be packaged and clearly labeled with the type of seed, year saved and ideally the # of seeds included in each package. Any extra information about the variety and where it was grown are great!
- Have envelopes, pens & labels (masking tape works!) available at the table for those who didn't do their packaging & labeling ahead of time
- Have a consistent suggested donation for seed packages if you're making them available to people who didn't bring their own to trade
- Create different tables or zones for the different types of materials expected (e.g. seeds, rhizomes, plants) and perhaps further subdivide seeds into smaller categories such as tomatoes, beans, other vegetables, flowers etc.
- Use lots of signage – if possible, place them up above head level so participants can easily read them even if there's a crowd.
- Keep the tables as neat and organized as possible throughout the day to make for easier selection
- Be prepared to provide lots of bags and boxes of different sizes for the public to carry away their new materials.
- Give volunteers distinctive clothing so participants can easily see who to get advice from
- Have a float with plenty of small change if you're selling seeds
- Identify an organization to donate any leftover seeds to

Examples from experienced organizers:

- In Victoria, each person who brings in seed fills out a registry for each variety, supplying basic information about where the seed was grown and its characteristics
- In Winnipeg, seeds are spread out according to type--perennials, annuals, herbs, and vegetables. People are given a ticket for each packet they bring in and can exchange the ticket for another packet of seed.

Many organizers found that the first year they held this event, few people brought seeds to swap, so don't be discouraged if the exchange doesn't take off right away!

## Vendors & Exhibitors

Most events invite a variety of local organizations and nonprofits to have tables at their event. This can be a great way to add educational value, create more local investment, and help attract attendees.

### *Exhibitors*

Consider inviting organizations of an organic, horticultural or ecological nature to have tables at your event. Keen organizations may even become partners - helping with promotions and finding volunteers.

### *Vendors*

Not all Seedy Saturdays include vendors, but including vendors can certainly help boost community interest in your event. Some events do not have any selling of seeds, choosing to keep all the focus on the seed exchange.

If you're inviting vendors, here are a few things to consider:

- Will you ask for an advance deposit to hold their spot?
- Will you charge a table fee?
- Will you provide tables? chairs? electricity? Make sure vendors are clear on these items
- When can they set up? When do they have to leave by?
- Ask seed vendors to bring only bring open-pollinated seeds, not hybrids

Write up an agreement so everyone is clear on fees and expectations.

You may want to consider having all exhibitors and vendors sign waivers, in the unlikely event that their materials or goods are damaged or stolen, or one of their representatives is injured.

*See Appendix A for some ideas of exhibitors and vendors to invite.*

## Educational Activities

### *Workshops and Speakers:*

You may want to invite local experts in various aspects of seed conservation to speak or conduct a workshop. These experts include the vendors at your event and speakers.

*Appendix B* has a list of workshop & presentation ideas.

You could pay speakers, waive table fees, give gift certificates or simply ask for volunteers.

Workshops often work best run in separate rooms from the vendors and seed exchange. The number of workshops will be affected by how much space you have, how difficult it is to find presenters, your budget for paying speakers, and the number of attendees you expect.

### *Children's Activities:*

You may want to consider having a children's area with activities running throughout the day. These could include: painting and drawing, planting seeds, seed card/paper making/crafts, Seedy Jeopardy, seedy BINGO, a scavenger hunt or other games. A local 4H club, church, or school may be able to offer some help, and we have a list of kids' activities and ideas available - get in touch!

[seedysaturdays@seeds.ca](mailto:seedysaturdays@seeds.ca)

### *Interactive Displays*

Interactive displays are a great way to engage attendees: Observation hives, seed cleaning displays, seed sorting activities and seed ID games are just a few ideas for setting up interactive activities right on the trade show floor.

## **Entry Fees, Donations, and Fundraising**

Seedy Saturdays should be inexpensive or free to attend. Entry fees generally range from 0-\$5, often collected as "suggested donations." If you're collecting door fees, don't forget to bring a sufficient float!

You may want to solicit donations for raffles or door prizes. Exhibitors may be willing to donate gifts, which can be raffled to raise funds. A coat check can also be an effective fundraiser.

Many events collect donations specifically for Seeds of Diversity or other non-profit organizations, or donate a portion of their proceeds.

## **Event Signage**

Clear signage is important so people can find their way to and around your event. Try to include:

- Large signs or sandwich boards on the road to direct people to your venue
- Door signs to direct people to various rooms
- Signage for donations/admission fees
- Seed Exchange table signage
- Large signage for children's activities, café or any other special areas



## Tracking Money and Attendance

Attendance at Seedy Saturdays across the country varies from a few dozen to over 2000. Events often grow with time as momentum builds and word spreads. Keeping track of attendance and revenue helps with budgeting and planning in the future. It's also helpful for Seeds of Diversity to track trends across the country from year to year. Even if no fee is charged, handing out door prize tickets is one way to keep track of attendance.

## Volunteers

In addition to your organizing committee, you may want to attract some volunteers to help with tasks such as set-up, display staffing, front door, exhibitor hosting, managing the seed exchange table, workshop A/V, and cleaning up. Have a suggestion book on hand that volunteers can write feedback in throughout the event.

## Educational Materials

*Seeds of Diversity has the following available:*

- Seed Saving books
- Biodiversity & Canadian Seed Library posters
- Table signage for donations
- and more; please visit [For Volunteers](#)

We also have our [Seedy Saturday Speaker Series](#), a set of presentations available for playing at events. And, new for 2025, we have a Resource Folder for Organizers with materials compiled from various sources.

Contact us at [seedysaturdays@seeds.ca](mailto:seedysaturdays@seeds.ca) for assistance and access to resource.

### *Seed Catalogues*

About 2 months before the event send an email to all the heritage seed companies - use the [Canadian Seed Catalogue Index](#) or the [Seed Companies Map](#) - asking them to mail some copies of their current seed catalogues. At the event, make the catalogues available for people to pick up.

## Want More Help or Ideas?

Visit other Seedy Saturdays!

Join the email list! Talk to organizers of existing events. Contact [seedysaturdays@seeds.ca](mailto:seedysaturdays@seeds.ca) for more information.

# APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX A

### Examples of Exhibitors & Vendors to Invite

#### *Exhibitors*

<i>Gardening &amp; Seed Saving Organizations</i>	<i>Ecology &amp; Environmental Organizations</i>	<i>Farms &amp; Farming Organizations</i>	<i>Other Organizations</i>
Seeds of Diversity	North American Native Plant Society	Rare Breed Canada	Local historical groups
USC Canada	Canadian Wildflower Society	Beekeepers & Beekeeping Associations	Horticulture clubs
Composting Council of Canada	Field Naturalists	Local farms (vegetable, fruit, herb, grain)	Museums with heritage gardens
Canadian Organic Growers	Outdoor Education Centres	Ecological Farmers of Ontario	Kid's clubs
Master Gardeners		4H Clubs	Libraries
Seed libraries			Local government gardening programs
Community Gardening groups			

#### *Vendors*

Seed Companies (for a list of companies and how to get in touch, visit the [Canadian Seed Catalogue Index](#))

Local artisans

Garden supplies vendors

Seedling growers

Native plant nurseries

Beneficial insect companies

Vermi-composting suppliers

Caterers/Bakeries/Prepared food vendors

## APPENDIX B

### Workshop and Presentation Topic Ideas

Seed Saving	Growing Heritage _____	Attracting Pollinators
Seed Cleaning	Natural Lawn Care	Building Pollinator Habitat
Vermicomposting	Organic Pest Control	Sprouting
Composting	Starting Seeds / Seedlings	Gardening with Native Plants
Spring Garden Prep	Indigenous Seed Saving Projects	Urban Agriculture
Container / Balcony Gardening	Permaculture	Community Gardens
Eco-landscaping	Forest Gardening	Food Preservation
Garden Design	Beneficial Insects	School Gardens

## APPENDIX C

### Treasurer's Report

The following is a sample treasurer's report after a Seedy Saturday

Income	Admission, includes float	\$600
	Donations	\$150
	Table Rentals	\$325
	Community grant	\$300
		\$1375
Expenses	Hall Rental	\$250
	Event insurance	\$42
	Signs (inc. shipping)	\$225
	Coin Rolls	\$1.06
	Hand Stamp	\$3.50
	Float	\$100
	Speaker honorariums	\$300
	Door prizes	\$110
	Refreshments	\$120.50
		\$1152.06
Income over expenses:		\$222.94

APPENDIX D

Seed Pledge

Here is a safe seed pledge used with permission from the Sooke Seedy Saturday

*Seed and Plant Pledge for Sooke Seedy Saturday*

*The goal of our Seedy Saturday is to promote local ecologically grown seed and plants and support local seed producers and growers. The people coming to our event expect all the seeds and plants at the event to be GMO free, safe for our environment, grown out by the vendor or at least clearly indicated if not grown by the vendor, and clearly labeled as such if invasive.*

*GROWER/VENDOR STATEMENT for Sooke Seedy Saturday*

By signing, each vendor selling seeds confirms that:

1. you are not knowingly selling GMO seed or plants;
2. the seeds/plants you are selling have been grown out by you or your designate, either on your property or an offsite location that you approve;
3. the seeds/plants you are selling have been grown out by another grower for which you have an exchange arrangement in place, and you identify this detail in your respective catalogues or at your table;
4. any seed/plants grown by farmer(s) you do not know are clearly identified as such at your table, in your respective catalogs or on your seed packets.
5. Any seeds/plants you sell considered invasive are labeled clearly as such.

*Signed* \_\_\_\_\_

*Print Name* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date* \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return this page only to [email] or include with your exhibitor application.*