

SDSL's Cornerstone Newsletter

South Dakota State Library's e-newsletter

June 1, 2023

Growing a Seed Library with the Rapid City Public Library

The Rapid City Public Library opened their new seed library in early May. The seed library offers free, open-pollinated seeds, as well as educational resources on planting, growing, harvesting, and seed saving. "The idea is to support the community in growing their own food while promoting the idea of saving seeds at the end of their harvest," said Garrett Bach, Library Associate, who helped to start the seed library at the Rapid City Public Library.

The seed library is open to all Pennington County residents, including those without library cards. They currently offer 32 varieties of seeds, with a focus on vegetables, herbs, and fruits. "I think it's important to highlight that programs like this help remove barriers to access for families interested in growing healthy food who may otherwise be unable to do so," said Bach. "It might seem like a small thing, but I really believe that it can be a great resource for folks to use. That's why I put such a heavy emphasis on using open-pollinated varieties, so those who are interested are able to save seeds from their harvest and reuse them in years to come."



Bach first got interested in seed libraries from an undergraduate course he took at University of South Dakota called "Plants and Civilizations." The course focused on both the origins of agriculture and current agricultural practices. The book *Never Out of Season* by Rob Dunn was also an inspiration for Bach. Bach shared, "[*Never Out of Season*] provides a glimpse into how we keep food on our grocery store shelves while highlighting our need to preserve plant diversity, which is rapidly declining."

The seed library has gotten an overwhelmingly positive reception, Bach shared. "I knew it was going to be popular, but even I have been surprised at the response we've gotten so far. It's a great resource for our community, and I think the public is really responding to that." The biggest challenge so far has been logistics and keeping enough seeds on the shelf – a good problem to have.





For other libraries interested in starting a seed library, Bach gives some advice: "Don't be intimidated, but be sure to do your research first. I spent a good deal of time reading up on similar programs and contacting other seed libraries in the state. The seed libraries in Yankton, Vermillion, and Common Roots in Sioux Falls were all incredibly helpful. I would encourage any library that is interested in starting a program like this to go ahead and take the leap. I think they will be pleasantly surprised by the interest they receive from the community."



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The South Dakota State Library provides leadership for innovation and excellence in libraries and services to state government.

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