

Parks and Environment Committee - Toronto Seed Library comments for 2013.PE23.1 on October 23, 2013 Parks and Environment Committee

From: Seed Saver <torontoseedlibrary@gmail.com>
To: <pec@toronto.ca>
Date: 2013-10-23 8:01 AM
Subject: Toronto Seed Library comments for 2013.PE23.1 on October 23, 2013 Parks and Environment Committee

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the October 23, 2013 Parks and Environment Committee meeting on item 2013.PE23.1, Toronto Agricultural Program

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

Toronto Seed Library Partnership with Toronto Public Libraries

Below is a brief proposal intended for the City of Toronto, Toronto Public Library, and other partners, to grow upon the proposed “Toronto Agricultural Program” through a pilot seed library program, inside Toronto Public Libraries for the spring of 2014, with the support of the Toronto Seed Library community.

Why? We need seeds to grow. The primary purpose of this proposed partnership is to increase the *accessibility* of urban agriculture across Toronto and especially priority neighbourhoods by expanding our free seed lending library project and offering popular educational classes focusing on seed, food and gardening literacy. Many people in Toronto desire to grow their own food but are lacking the necessary resources to do so, in particular seeds, which are central to agriculture, and an awareness of how to grow and save them.

What is a “seed library” - Seed libraries compliment conventional public libraries by lending organic, native, heirloom and open pollinated seeds. Each seed library is unique to the place and the people involved. Generally people come to the library to borrow and return seeds, meet other gardeners, learn through classes and print and online materials, gather seed growing and saving information, participate in hands on projects and special events. People plant seeds in their gardens, raise the plant, let a bit of it go to seed and bring some of those mature seeds back to the library to replenish the collection. Just as traditional libraries encourage mass literacy, seed libraries propagate seed, food and garden literacy.

Seed Libraries “Go Fungal” – Since the first seed library in the Grimsby Public Library in 2013, across

Ontario, the following public libraries have adopted seed library projects: Markham, Vaughan, Orillia, Collingwood, Meaford, Haliburton County, Perth & Lanark County, and Prince Edward County. Seed Libraries are also located inside community centres, schools, places of worship and other public places. Hundreds of seed libraries have opened up across North America in the past couple years. The conditions are ripe to sprout and nurture this seedy idea into reality.

The Toronto Seed Library has opened 5 functional branches in 2013, including the most popular “roaming branch”. The TSL has gathered, processed, packaged and lent out hundreds of thousands of seeds through our 5 branches and at dozens of community events around Toronto, GTA and Ontario. The TSL is set to open at least 5 more branches in time for the spring of 2014. Seed libraries are currently located within York University, High Park Nature Centre, St. Stephens Church, Toronto Tool Library and the Permaculture Project GTA HQ in Scarborough.

The seed is growing inside the TPL: A librarian in the Parliament Street branch of the Toronto Public Library has submitted a proposal to create a seed library program for 2014. Many librarian students, public librarians and branch managers are excited about this program and are eager to participate.

The need for cooperation and creativity: Collaboration is vital to save resources, costs and to increase the accessibility of seeds and urban agriculture, especially considered through an equity lens. Seed Libraries emphasize literacy and resource sharing, and reintroduce concepts like the commons, they preserve our cultural and natural heritage while cultivating and celebrating our diversity.

Accompanying seed libraries, info graphics like local food and garden maps can be displayed, alongside gardening literature and local opportunities for digging in. Free classes in the library and nearby gardens educate the public on how to grow healthy plants and seeds. Small branches of the seed library can be easily created with recycled materials and stocked with the communities extra seeds that often go to waste. They inhabit very little space and when located in high traffic public places they rapidly increase awareness and access to urban agriculture. An abundance of seeds freely and equitably distributed will encourage new gardeners to experiment with growing and offer continued community support through the growing season.

What the Toronto Seed Library can do to help scale up Urban Agriculture in Toronto: The TSL community offers experience, resources, seeds and a fast growing network of volunteers across the city ready to support the development of new branches within the TPL, TDSB, TCHC and beyond. Specifically we can help identify and establish new branches, facilitate ongoing programming and maintenance of public seed collections, ensuring public buy-in, sustainability and seed quality. The Toronto Seed Library has strong support from the urban agriculture and established seed saving community, it is free and open to all to participate with a strong emphasis on cultural and biological diversity.

First Steps:

1. Integrate the concept of the seed library within the proposed new Toronto Urban Agriculture program, to support a more equitable access to the seeds and resources necessary to grow food
2. Invite the Toronto Public Libraries to participate moving forward in the Toronto Urban Agriculture program as a host for seed sharing, gardening literacy and community food programming.
3. Gather stakeholders from the seed, urban agriculture and library communities to nurture the idea and

flesh out the details.

Contact us and tell your friends to root this seedy idea in our fair and fertile city!

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Facebook: Page, Toronto Seed Library , www.facebook.com/torontoseedlibrary

Twitter: @FreeSeedsTO

Thank you! Sincerely,

**Jacob Kearey-Moreland,
Cultivator, Toronto Seed Library**

October 23rd, 2013