

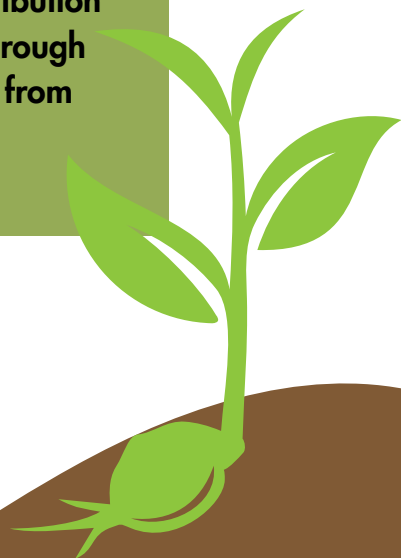


2023 Free Seed Distro Report

Cooperative Gardens Commission (CGC) started in March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. CGC is a decentralized collective of volunteers working to increase community food production, resource-sharing, and food sovereignty especially in communities that were struggling before the pandemic. Ever since our initial “call to action” for gardeners and farmers to come together as a network for resource and knowledge exchange we have established a web of seed hubs across the country. These hubs not only receive seeds through our annual seed distribution but also act as leaders in their communities, connecting the actions of local gardeners to a wider movement for food security.

The Cooperative Gardens Commission is composed of hundreds of volunteers from across North America working as a collective to facilitate the conscientious sharing of resources — including seeds, soil, equipment, labor, land, and knowledge — and build solidarity across traditional divides. We are farmers, gardeners, activists, and organizers. We believe increasing local food production can help build community power and resilience. While CGC began developing a new network in the face of this tragic pandemic — and the ineffective government response to it — we recognize that the movement for food sovereignty and against food apartheid is wide and deep, so we primarily seek to support the work of existing networks and projects.

As the pandemic has entered a new phase and inflation, global conflict, and a return to the normalcy of exploitation at work have shaped the lives of our volunteers, seed hubs, and their communities our project has developed. We have honed our focus on our annual seed distribution as it has proved the best way to keep connections between our hubs alive and to forge new ones at a sustainable pace. As seed savers have known for generations, sharing seeds is never as simple as sharing the physical entities. Stories, knowledge, and social connections flow through our seed distribution work, as we connect nearby hubs together and facilitate knowledge sharing through our website and conversations with individual seed hubs as we send the seeds from our central hub in Philadelphia.



The CGC Philadelphia Seed Club distributed to 270 seed hubs in 2023.

We had an incredible array of applications to be seed hubs and were impressed with the range of Community Gardens, Seed Libraries, School Gardens, Food Banks, and enthusiastic individuals who spearheaded distributing to their communities. Each seed hub distributed from between 50 - 3,000 people, working with up to 50 other groups to distribute seeds. While it is hard to put an exact number to the impact of CGC's seed distribution effort,

we estimate that the average seed hub distributes to between 150-200 people, which means that in 2023 alone, about 54,000 people had seeds in their hands from CGC.



The CGC takes grassroots organizing very seriously. We are open, transparent, non-hierarchical, and committed to consensus-based decision-making. Our network of growers, activists, and educators aims to capitalize on the work that thousands of people are doing all across this country to feed their communities, and this requires we maintain a fiercely democratic culture. We operate as a non-profit organization under the fiscal sponsorship of The Experimental Farm Network Cooperative, a Philadelphia-based 501(c)(3).



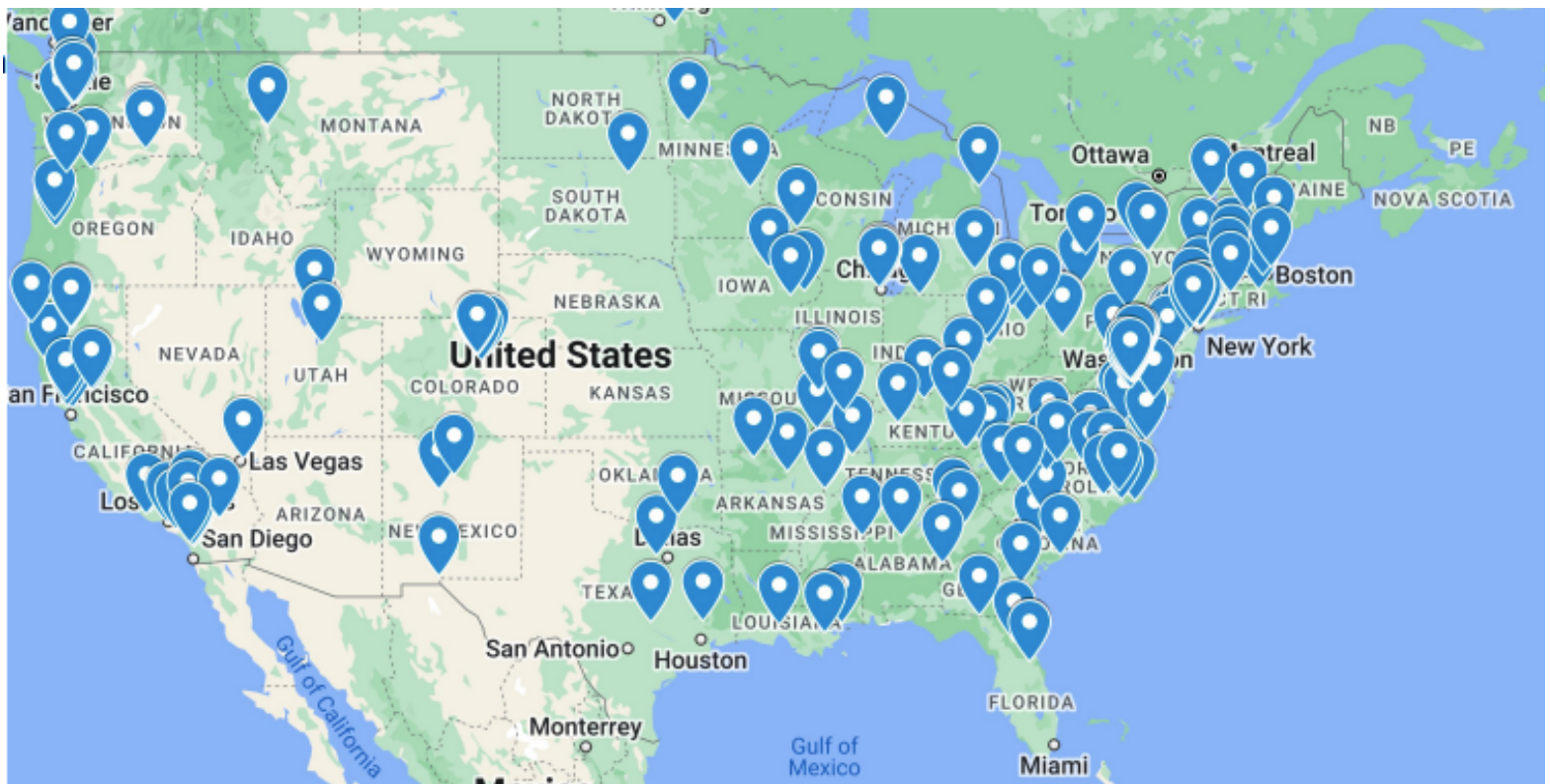
An illustration of several hands of different colors (red, brown, white) holding various seeds. The background is a textured green. The hands are arranged in a circle, with some holding seeds and others holding produce like a watermelon slice.

267 Hubs in 42 states and Canada

76 Seed Hub survey responses report nearly 40,000 people received seeds or produce

Distribution of the 261 Seed Hubs in 2023

Seed Hubs receive boxes containing a huge variety of bulk and individual packets of seeds to distribute to their community.



Kensington Corridor Trust

Kensington in Philadelphia, PA

How many individuals received seeds?

50-80



We did an entire day of community celebration and launched the start of our vegetable garden beds. We distributed seeds to community members and celebrated with food, and a day in the pollinator garden.



We are a collective ownership neighborhood trust and our goal is to work with neighbors together to spark more businesses in the community, and collectively own and govern them. In addition, we are committed to transforming our vacant spaces into safe, clean, and green areas that can be utilized by community members. Seed sharing was one way we could continue building relationships with folks in the neighborhood as well as teach folks about collective ownership, solidarity economy, and more.



Since the beginning of Covid, we have distributed 12,000 packets of seed in this remote, rural community!

**Seed Library at the Round Valley Public Library
Covelo, CA**

Egleston Square Branch Library Friends group

Boston, CO

How many individuals received seeds?

80-120



Bill Dixon

Kennewick,

How many individuals received seeds?

300-700



I distributed seeds at three seed starting classes, seven "growing food in containers" classes, through the local food bank, and to immigrant and refugee families through the Family Learning Center and Habitat for Humanity.

I have been a seed hub from the start and have multiple community groups and school gardens where I distribute seeds. I have designed multiple gardens for grade schools and senior community gardens, then share seeds with them. With your generous support, we have developed four new seed hubs in surrounding counties and even started a northern California CGC group on social media to educate and share seeds and plants including a dozen take a plant/leave a plant stands where you can pickup and exchange free seeds and plants in urban and remote rural communities. This has brought an invaluable resource so many, I thank each and everyone involved in creating and supporting this food security revolution... My mission is to increase awareness of food sustainability on a local level. The CGC has made it possible to create a stronger community of home and community gardens.

Marion Shaw
Shasta Lake,
CA



TreePhilly offers seeds at some of our free yard tree giveaway events. In addition to fruiting and flowering trees, we can offer free compost and wood chip mulch and seeds! Not everyone can or wants to welcome a tree into their yard, but they can still participate by planting seeds.



St. Joseph Community Gardens

St. Joseph, MO

How many individuals received seeds?

80-120



We had a good interest this year especially at a free Easter Egg Hunt event where we were able to hand out seeds. We even gave kids a chance to plant and take home sunflowers. We've had several community members share their home garden pics with us on social media. It was a good year of giving!

Ekar Farm

Denver, CO

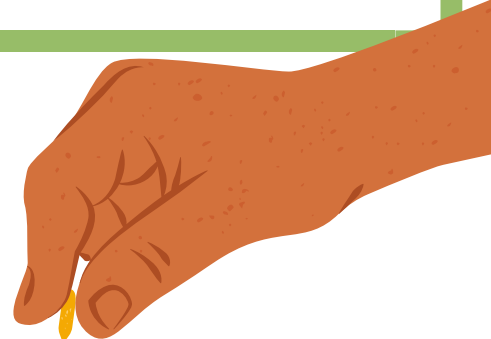
How many individuals received seeds?

more than 700



We increased our seed distribution work through our Cooperative Garden Initiative Program at Ekar Farm by about 20% this year. We collect seeds from all over the country and have become one of the largest seed hubs in Colorado. This year we collected seeds from over 12 seed companies/organization and distributed these seeds to 32 partner organization. Between our partner orgs and our own network we distributed seeds to over 20,000 individuals.

Madison County Seed Library Madison, FL



There was a boy in the community who got his seeds from the seed library for his first garden ever. His neighbor tilled the garden and gave him advice. The youngster was super successful, both selling and sharing his bounty, and was featured in the local newspaper.

The children in my community were so excited about the seeds, we now have a children's community garden. Everyday most of the kids would come by to check on the seeds, water them, & tell them to grow big & tall. When the kids harvested their "crops" the excitement on their faces truly made my summer. Hopefully we're planting seeds within the kids to be self sustaining adults



Leah Ingram
Wilsonville, AL



We partnered with 14 seed distribution partners throughout our 9-county region in Northwest Tennessee. This year, there were participants in the #GrowFoodChallenge from EACH county!

Northwest Tennessee Local Food Network



Bethel Community Gardens Bethel Advocacy Community Committee

Bethel NC

How many individuals received seeds?

20-50



Bringing people community together. People came together to package seeds and distribute shared ideas of planting season methods and harvesting



Farm to School Program, Schenectady City School District


Schenectady, NY

How many individuals received seeds?

more than 700



Our community is food insecure with limited access to fresh produce. Food resiliency and justice are core components of our Farm to School program. We began a Seeding Schenectady initiative last school year where we distributed seeds and grow kits to over 50 classrooms around the district, as well as started seeds in our highschool greenhouse to distribute to all our school gardens (15) as well as to school families. Students also direct-sowed seeds in our school gardens. Almost 2,000 students received seeds through these initiatives.



At the Phoenix Legacy House, we seek to become effective earth stewards who practice regenerative agriculture, empower BIPOC communities through education to continue a legacy for generations to come. This effort is black-led and female-led. We measure success by doing what we love each day. If we aren't in the community or in a meeting about serving our communities each day, we aren't successful that day. Sharing seeds are one of the ways we serve our community. The CGC seed distribution is the only place we get our seeds in bulk, so it is imperative to have a working relationship with you. The other place is we ask farmers to give us seed packets nearing expiration if they aren't using them. We consider near expiration if they have had them for 2 or more years/growing seasons.

The Phoenix Legacy House Baltimore, MD

The Resiliency Gardens Project, in Needham MA, founded in Covid, and we distributed 70 raised bed gardens since. This year we are breaking ground on our 'Resiliency Gardens Growing Space'. A major hiccup happened on Aug 8th, when 150 plus homes and businesses in my community flooded due to a Climate Catastrophic rain storm and flooding event. Our 'Growing Space' turned into 2 rivers and a lake of contaminated water. Our motto is Resiliency: re-envisioning, re-creating, re-generating. We will be doing all this fall! Some indoor growing will happen soon. We were gifted an aquaponics set up, plus we have another growing space, grow lights. We are decontaminating buildings, soil and working with NOFA Mass and other groups to test, mitigate, cover crop and remediate if necessary.

We have been Mutual Aid since day 1 and have been able to rely on this system of mutual aid, organizationally as well as personally. We are now forming a Climate Catastrophe/Natural disaster regional Mutual Aid group. Seriously was not in the game plan! Now we have about 200 other households in our community who are seriously interested in this.

CGC seeds and community have been so invaluable to us! I love receiving the annual package! I only wish I lived closer to PA so I could be a part of the miraculous seed. packing distro operations! Though it can be serious work, it can also create community and fun. Please keep up the amazing work! When I give presentations on the work Resiliency Gardens Project does, I often mention CGC and the amazing community and how we got seeds out to 12,000 community and other gardening groups for FREE. People of means are always surprised to find out how this works



“ This year we reached a much larger community base by taking part in local community events... We are an org of disabled people spreading the good message about the healing power of plants. Parts of our work focus on food and disability justice, food sovereignty, land stewardship, and indigenous ways.

Transplanted Collective Bloomington, CA



During the seed starting events, we saw community building in a way we didn't predict. The people who came to the first seed starting day wanted to keep coming back, and we saw that each event people felt a real connection. Once the starts were off on their way, I didn't get to see what happened to them too much, but for one flat of tomatoes, half went to Chula Vista High School for their Food Justice class to plant in the garden, and the other half went to a new farmer that just needed to get more tomatoes in the ground. Each time I visited both of these gardens I saw the tomatoes growing, and they all did fantastic. It was cool to know that the seeds were started with new connections and they grew with the farmers of the next generation!

Food To Soil San Diego, CA



Barrier free garden help. For everyone! The seed library is located in the Upper 9th Ward but seeds are packed and distributed across five parishes to any individual or organization interested in gardening. We have a lot of food insecurity, but a year round growing climate. Connecting people to resources is key, and seeds are just one tool to reconnect people to a local, resilient food system.

**LSU
AgCenter
Greater New
Orleans Area**



**Independence
County Library
Batesville, AR**

We had to limit the number of seed packets each person could take so there would be enough for everyone...We have partnered with the County Extension Office to give classes on gardening, harvesting, cooking, and canning.

Burien Little Seed Library Burien, WA

I also was able to collect donations at the market, and to a lesser degree from the vending machine in the seed library to purchase little bags for the seeds and dirt for the starts I offer up at the market and seed library. Offering a small selection of starts increases the number of people who engage with the seed library and encourages people to take seeds, talk about seed sharing, and cover crops.

I also created two single page mini zines on savings lettuce and bean seeds. Hopefully we'll have more and more donations once people start harvesting their seeds.

This year I've also been able to collect contact for a mailing list. I'm hoping to use my slow period in the garden to work on creating a newsletter for planting guidance and organizing a seed swap/encouraging others to host little seed libraries.

Napa County Seed Library Napa, CA

The CGS Seed Distro program greatly boosted our efforts to give out seed this year because of the large quantity and varied types of seed you sent to us! We were much more confident in our outreach this year because we had more to give through our seed library annexes and at in-person events. We partnered with many new organizations in 2023 because we could fully participate. These organizations were our Napa County Resource Conservation District, Mumm Napa (winery), the Oxbow Public Market, the St. Helena Public Library, New Technology High School, Girl Scout Troop and more.

