

Gladstone Regional Seed Library

What is it?

A seed library collection is where the library loans out seeds instead of books or DVDs.

How does it work?

Library members borrow seeds for free then plant and tend to their crops. The return on this long-term loan is not fresh produce but instead the return of some seeds from the yield. These seeds are then made available for members to plant next season

Seed Donations:

The library is happy to accept donated seeds. When giving a donation you will be required to fill in a seed donation form with as much details about the plant as possible. Gladstone Regional Council are not accountable for the content of seed donations and any errors in the information provided with them.

Information Handouts:

This range of information sheets and activities have been designed to provide basic information on the seeds available and help teachers and parents encourage and inspire their children's interest in nature.

Example Curriculum Ideas:

Science: Recycling, the environment and sustainability, food and nutrition.

Numeracy: Measuring weight/amount and types of material, using fractions/percentages (what goes in and how much comes out).

Literacy: Compost/garden diary (tasks, observations), making a garden scrapbook.

Art: Environmental art, collage of compost/natural materials.

History/geography: Study of plants and their uses historically for eating, medicine, making dyes. Make a scale drawing of the garden.

Further Reading and References

The following resources contain more information about the topic:

1. Seed Collection of Australian Native Plants: for Revegetation Tree Planting and Direct Seeding, 2nd Ed
2. Step-by-step Veg Patch- How to Grow Your Own Food in Australia by Lucy Chamberlain
3. The Australian Gardening Calendar by Penguin Publishing
4. RHS Propagating Plants: How to Create New Plants for Free Edited by Alan Toogood
5. The Edible Garden Cookbook & Growing Guide by Paul West
6. The Complete Idiot's Guide to Seed Saving & Starting by Sheri Ann Richerson
7. Manual of Seed Saving by Heisteringer/Miller

Seeds are freely available at all the Gladstone Regional Library branches:

- Agnes Water Library
- Boyne Tannum Community Centre
- Calliope Library
- Gladstone City Library
- Miriam Vale Library
- Mount Larcom Library
- Philips Street Family Precinct

For more information visit:

www.gladstonelibraries.qld.gov.au

Gladstone Regional Libraries

Seed Library DIY Collection

Starting a Seed Library



Image: Close Up Photograph of Dandelion Seeds
Source: Anthony

Starting up FAQs

Did/Does something stand out to you as having worked well during the establishment of your Seed Library?

- Combining a garden with the seed library worked well. I could point out what some of the seeds look like in flower/fruit and how to gather their seeds, our local newspaper really loved this idea and did several articles about it.
- Combining various services together, such as 3D printer to make Newspaper pot makers.

Biosecurity

- The local gardeners that are donating tend to have knowledge of what is a noxious weed, so we've never had noxious weed seeds (or drugs) donated.
- When donations come in, I do a simple visual assessment of the seed and if they have mould, mildew, or bugs then the seeds aren't used and are disposed of so as not to contaminate the rest of the stock.
- Seeds are stored separately in Ziplock bags, usually for several months.
- Seeds are packed on a clean table surface with one type of seed packed at a time

What is the process surrounding the 'checking out'/loaning of seeds to customers?

- We "loan" the seeds when we send the stock out to the branches. That way we get a more accurate number of packets being borrowed.
- Originally, we trialled barcodes on the front that would then be borrowed but it didn't work effectively.

What advice, if any, could you impart to help us succeed?

- Promotion promotion promotion.
- If you can get the local garden groups involved, jump at the chance as they might be a good source of seeds and even talks/info sessions.
- Have a large backstock of seeds packed ready to go. When COVID Closure hit we were wiped out as everyone borrowed seeds.
- We've also themed holiday events around gardens to push the collection.
- Roll it out to all your branches at once so you can have control over how it's set up. For a space poor Mobile Library, it could be an A4 stand that only held 4 different seed types, but just rotate the stock more often.

Where did you source your seeds?

- Bunnings and discount shops have a broad range of seeds such as carrots, lettuce, sunflowers that can be cheaply bought in bulk.
- Bought a few punnets of Corn, Cosmos and Marigold and harvested seeds (prolific seed producers)

EZ as 1,2,3,4 for Staff

1. **Collect or buy seeds** – try marigolds, cosmos, sunflowers and other easy to harvest plants.
2. **Pack Envelopes** - separate your seed supply into small press seal bags (a pinch is adequate if you don't want to count seeds). This will keep seeds fresher longer and mean they won't fall out of envelope if you hole punch it to hang them
3. **Make Labels** – If you're only doing a handful at a time you can handwrite labels or create a label that can then be used each time the same seed is packs. This also makes a more consistent look to the packets.
4. **Display Your Stock** – Just like your best sellers, you need to showcase the seed library, so people see it.

EZ as 1,2,3,4 for Patrons

1. **Borrow a packet** – patrons take a packet home. Each packet only has a few seeds, the idea is to try it not to seed a whole garden.
2. **Grow the seeds** – It's all about giving it a go. Even if people are self-proclaimed black thumbs get them to give it a go.
3. **Harvest** – pick the seed heads or the fruit and save the seeds. Put them aside and dry them out.
4. **Bring the seeds back** – Return seeds back to the library to be added back into the seed library.

Example Stationary Order (Office National)

The following list will get you 500 seed packets to start with (costing is approximate):

- 1x Cumberland P7 Envelopes Seed Pocket Moist Seal 85gsm 145 X 90mm Gold Box 500
- 5x Cumberland Press Seal Plastic Bags 50 Micron 50 X 75mm Clear Pack 100
- 1x Office National Premium Multipurpose Labels 8UP 99.1 X 67.7mm Pack 100

Total: \$120 approx.