

## Seed-sharing trend takes root in Port

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM  
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### <http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/040413/seedsSM.png> **Encouraged by success of community garden and resurgence of grow-local movement, Niederkorn Library officials are planning to open seed library next year**

Port Washington gardeners may head to the Niederkorn Library before sowing their plots next year as a national trend takes root here.

Expanding on a growing trend in gardening, library officials are planning to open a seed library next spring.



The library would allow gardeners to check out seeds, plant them and, if the crop is successful, harvest the seeds as well as the produce.

“This would give people the opportunity to try a couple of plants they wouldn’t otherwise try,” Annie Bahringer, director of adult services at the library, said. “They wouldn’t have to spend \$3 for a packet of seeds.”

People would check out the seeds they want, but they don’t have to pledge to replace them, she said.

“It’s nothing that’s expected,” Bahringer said. “After all, anything can happen. Crops fail.”

The library plans to offer programs to teach people how to harvest seeds along with their produce, she said.

Elizabeth O’Connell, whose Ozaukee Gardener column appears in Ozaukee Press, said a

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seed library is likely to be popular in Port, where many people garden in their yards or at the community garden.

“This definitely fills a need here in town,” she said. “I think a lot of people just don’t know how many different things can be successfully grown here.”

The benefits tie in with those of gardening overall — people become more connected to their food and more conscious of what they’re eating, she said.

“People are getting concerned about what they’re eating,” O’Connell said.

Seed savers and seed libraries help preserve plants that otherwise might be lost, she added.

Bahringer, an avid gardener who has been saving seeds for years, said when she began to hear about the concept of seed libraries she immediately thought it would fit in at the Port library.

“I know we have a lot of gardeners here,” she said. “We have the community garden that’s so successful and the Master Gardeners here. This is an up-and-coming concept that I thought would work here.”

She seems to be right. About 15 people showed up for the initial planning meeting two weeks ago. The next organizational meeting will be held at the library at 5 p.m. Friday, April 26.

Library Director David Nimmer said the idea of a seed library fits in with the idea of having collections that are unique.

“The idea of having things that are a little bit different, that people might not otherwise be exposed to or be able to obtain, interests me,” he said. “This is a great idea and a good way to share and exchange your seeds.

“I know I’ll be taking advantage of it.”

Unlike seed libraries in many communities, the seed library here would not focus exclusively on heirloom or organic plants, Bahringer said.

“The idea is to get a line of Port Washington-grown seeds for plants that grow well here,” she said.

In addition to vegetables, seeds for flowers and herbs would also be kept in the library.

The library has already received quite a few contributions, Bahringer said, among them seeds for sweet pea currant tomatoes, a small flavorful tomato plant that her mother grows, and garlic.

Nimmer said he grew ground tomatoes last year and his family loved them so much he plans to contribute their seeds to the library.

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“We love them so much, and that’s the kind of thing I’d want to share,” he said.

Gardeners with extra seeds around the house are invited to contribute them to the seed library, even if they’re a couple years old.

“I have seeds that are three or four years old and they’re fine,” Bahringer said. “They’re just dormant.”

Although the logistics are still being worked out, organizers know where the seeds will be kept — in an old card catalog that was once used to keep track of books at the library.

“It’s just the right size,” Bahringer said.

Monetary donations are also being sought because organizers will likely need to buy some seeds to establish the library, she said. And because not everyone will replace the seeds they use, donations will be needed on an annual basis.

A contest may be held to name the seed library, Bahringer said, adding it might be only the second in the state. The only other seed library she knows of is in the La Crosse Public Library, which focuses on heirloom seeds.

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Image Information: SEEDS INTENDED FOR a seed library and gardening books were held Tuesday by Annie Bahringer, director of adult services at the Niederkorn Library in Port Washington. Planning for the seed exchange at the Port library is being done now with an opening expected in 2014. Photo by Sam Arendt