

SEEDS TO COMMUNITY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

VISION AND MISSION

Like a seasonal rice camp (or a maple sugar boiling party, a quilting bee, or communal shared crop harvesting) we come together as a group and enable “Barn Raising” tasks, at scale, with logistics, materials, and expertise. Each event offers lots of hands-on opportunities to engage with other souls and the natural world. After each camp event, we disperse back to our villages to nurture life, to grow hope, and to build an intimacy with nature’s children. After the baby plants have grown up and are ready to live on their own, we disperse among the other villagers offering our beautiful little plants to everyone, enriching local natural diversity along the way.

We hope to enable people to implement hyper local community projects of their own.

Offer a series of hands-on events, sharing with the larger community our collective knowledge, propagating native plants from seed, enabling community members to share/swap/donate and expand neighborhood habitat awareness events.

Ideally, resource support, collaboration and participation from like-minded agencies (e.g Washtenaw County Water Resources, Conservation Districts, City of Ann Arbor NAP, AADL, Adapt, UofM SEAS, Matthaei, native grower technicians and other conservation organizations).

Guiding Principles:

1. Everyone deserves diverse natural places and experiences and rich native communities, no matter where they live or how much money they have.
2. Offer regular opportunities to interact with, hands on, and steward our local natural resources. Enable the community to steward their own property and the communal areas in their neighborhood.
3. We are not doing enough currently to meet the moment and the challenges (ecological and social) and to scale solutions to match our communal needs.

Goals:

1. Teach how to grow native plants, through hands-on practice in seed collection, giving a winter treatment (i.e. stratification), planting and growing a wide range of species.
2. Enable participants to build capacity by providing a space to get together with other participants from across the community at scale.
3. Enable non-profit groups to scale their approach to local habitat restoration. Enable them to source their own home grown plants for those projects.
4. To build the community demand for ecological services, native products, and landscape design/installation through building awareness and familiarity with habitat stewardship actions. Where attention goes, money flows.

Event introduction points:

1. Native plants are about habitat and rebuilding vibrant natural communities. No other plants can do that.
2. Seeds to Community Series progression and crowd working. Together doing more.
3. Donations cover expenses. If inclined, donate as you can into the provided box.
4. Pictures, questions and share your little discoveries: Seeds2Community@gmail.com, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/seedstocommunitywashtenaw>
5. We are all volunteers. We hope you will have patience with the process, with our collective challenges, and each other.

Example 2024 Introduction and Demonstration

(Participants can leave as soon as they like after the General Flow description)

General Overview

1. **SERIES INTRODUCTIONS**
 2. **PLANTING BACKGROUND**
 3. **WINTER SOWING DEMONSTRATION**
 4. **TRAY PLANTING DEMONSTRATION**
 5. **SPECIES SELECTION.** Work with volunteers and our many resources to write down the species you hope to grow.
 6. **PREP CONTAINERS**, including dirt and labels in the lower half of the plant house. **Survey Question**
 - a. Outdoors -> Winter Sowing with jugs
 - b. Indoors with lights and daily care -> Tray planting
 7. **SEEDS.** Seed room and small bowls. Don't bother bringing your dirt. Spilled seeds and our tables don't mix. One bowl at a time. Take your time.
 8. **PLANT.** Scatter your seeds in your container, seal and art it up.
- Donations cover expenses. If inclined, donate as you can into a provided box. We believe that nature and vibrant life-filled communities are valuable things. We hope you will donate, as your resources allow, to support our activities. We endeavor to grow up to meet the community's interest and partnering with you is necessary for that to succeed. Ask us about other ways to practice **reciprocity** during this endeavor.
 - We are all **volunteers**. We hope you will have patience with the process, with our collective challenges, and each other. Be gentle with each other and our resources! We are all volunteers and our growth is dependent upon your goodwill. If we have limited resources, please be thoughtful as you consider taking more.

Series Introduction

- Seeds to Community Series:
 - Seed collection, processing, planting, growing, sharing
 - Plan to come back in April or May to up-pot little seedlings and share species with each other.
- **Native plants** are about habitat and rebuilding vibrant **natural communities**. No other plants can do that.
- **Mailing List**
- **Explore** as you go.

Planting Background

- Seeds and winter. Stratification. Scarification.

- Soil and moisture, mold, air motion, light intensity
- Soil settling
- Sand
- Soil contact
- Intensity of light
- Seedlings are delicate
- Planting depth
- Fertilizer (yummy for deer)
- Usually single species per container/tray
- What's your scale and time frame?
 - <10 = winter sowing
 - 50 = Up Potting
 - Memorial Day plugs = Tray Planting

Winter Sowing

- Drainage
- 3-4 inches of soil, with no voids. Finger pressing.
- Spread seeds (5-100) plants.
- Watering needs and mechanism
- Hunk of Seedlings
- Up-Potting (May)

Tray Planting

- Lights, greenhouse, big south facing windows, hoop house
- Soil and dropping
- Bottom watering
- Domes (moisture retention and mold)
- Up-Potting (April)

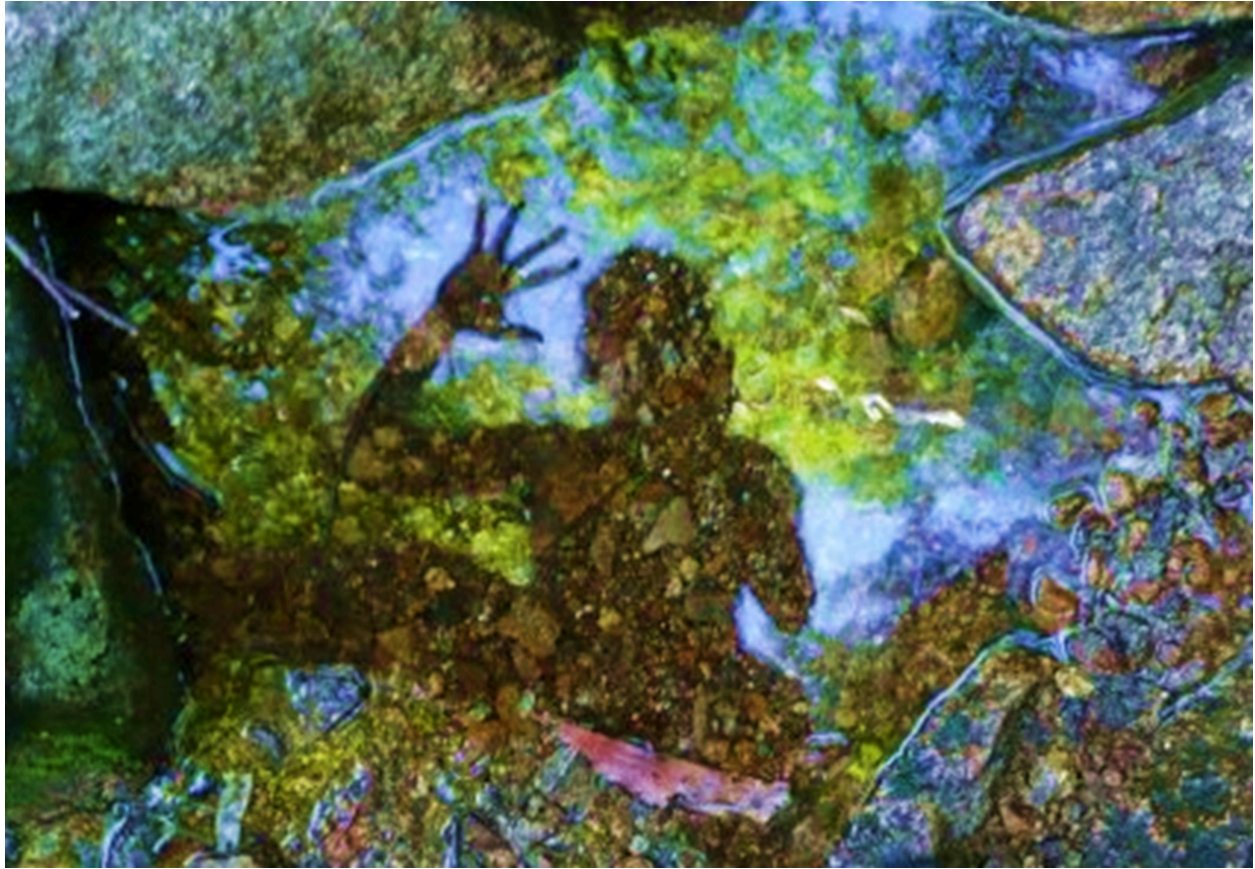
Introductions and demonstrations will be happening every hour and volunteers will be available to help with each step of the process. There are many many topics that often come up besides the mechanics of planting: species selection (right plant, right place), design, moisture, sun, invasive species, bugs, aesthetics, bees, height and location. So so much. We suggest that everyone go slow and keep in mind that simple first steps are a great accomplishment.

All our volunteers are learning as they go too, so please be gentle with them. There will be a heap of materials to help with species selection, but no one at our event knows it all. Take your time and treat the entire session as a little adventure. Botanical names are really very useful and can also be quite frustrating, so write them down as you go and have fun with it. We expect that most of the help will be in the species selection discussions.

A couple volunteers will be helping in the Seed Room. 70-90 species will be laid out in alphabetical order **by botanical name**. A few species need scarification and a little station will be set up for it. We will be giving out approximately a spoonful of seeds/sand for each container or tray. We will encourage people to only request a single species at a time because spilling seeds through the greenhouse tables is a very sad thing.

Reciprocity and Healing

In our new series of group events, we will encourage and practice reciprocity and believe that an intimate, reflective closeness with the natural world will help heal ourselves and our communities. Reflecting on our present-day relationships with nature, one could say that we seem collectively and chronically disoriented.



SEE YOURSELF IN NATURE

With this in mind, we hope you will live your values and build a "give and accept" relationship with the world around you. We structure our events to open our awareness of the abundance and the fragility of the world, stepping carefully, and supporting more than we take. We walk slowly and look for wisdom in the complexity of life. For the warriors among us, we rely upon an overall value system emphasizing compassion, generosity, and responsibility.

HONORABLE HARVEST

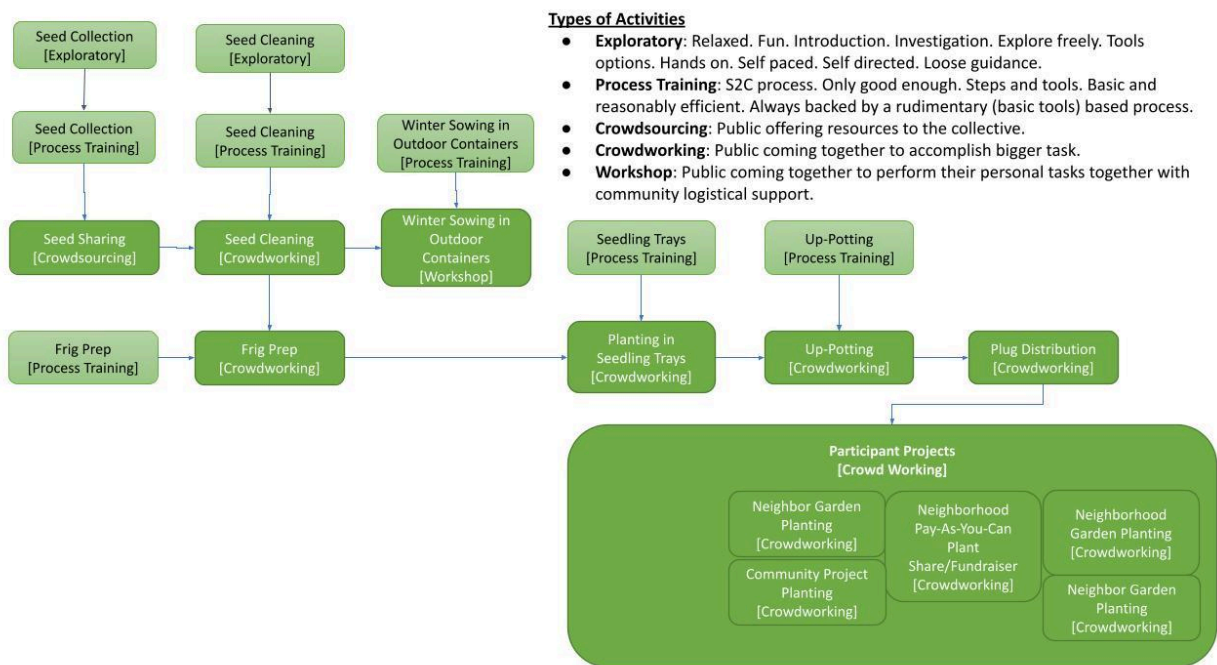
As we recognize the land as the foundation of our existence, we ask that you strive to honor the indigenous principles that guide the exchange of life for life. These patterns govern our acceptance of gifts from the world.

- Ask permission of the ones whose lives you seek. Abide by the answer.
- Never take the first. Never take the last.
- Harvest in a way that minimizes all harm.
- Take only what you need and leave plenty for all others.
- Use everything that you accept.
- Thoughtfully check with others (natural, social, corporate, university or institution) and take only that which is given.

- Share what you build, as the earth has shared with you.
- Be grateful and actively reciprocate the gifts you have accepted.
- As we sustain the ones who sustain us, the earth will last forever.

Types of Activities

- **Exploratory:** Relaxed. Fun. Introduction. Investigation. Explore freely. Tools options. Hands on. Self paced. Self directed. Loose guidance.
- **Process Training:** S2C process. Only good enough. Steps and tools. Basic and reasonably efficient. Always backed by a rudimentary (only basic tools) based process.
- **Crowdsourcing:** Public offering resources to the collective.
- **Crowdworking:** Public coming together to accomplish bigger “barn raising” tasks.
- **Workshop:** Public coming together to perform their personal tasks together with community logistical support.



Worthy Partner Characteristics and Expectations

- Collaborative spirit
- Community connections
- Amplification of events
- Build trust and identify shared actions to have a bigger impact in support of the series vision.
- Ask partners to skip big branding and swim with the event. Minimize your organization’s brand bow wave at events and in promotional materials.
- When providing functional actions, don’t hide your organizational affiliations, and do mention your offerings, just please do not distract from the series mission or the event

flow. Do take advantage of ad hoc openings to offer outside services or to recommend other organization's services.

Dealing with Scarcity Mindset - How to respond to requests that go beyond the specific offers of the current event (BIG requests for resources and desperate community members - hungry hungry hippos). (preliminary)

- Can I have all the remaining seed/jugs/soil?
- How to deal with the pile of requests that are likely to come?
- Seeds to Community events seek to enable, not supply, external non-profit projects. We are, however, likely to have extra resources at each step.
- We want to enable organizations to build capacity through networking and targeted logistical support. We do not endeavor to be the supplier for outside efforts.
- We are a place to share collected seeds, grow your own plants and then give back to the series and our community.
- Discourage participants from hounding others for donations. Read the room. Build relationships first. Verify trust and comfort of partners. Team up to accomplish more. Embrace the Honorable Harvest approach.
- Maybe a need based no, but a yes to something else. The most generous people are bounded people. I'm uncomfortable giving you an answer on this topic right now. I would like to share these seeds with you.
- Request for resources application questions?
- The Honorable Harvest:
 - <https://youtu.be/cEm7gblax0o>
 - <https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/good-health/2015/11/26/the-honorable-harvest-lessons-from-an-indigenous-tradition-of-giving-thanks>
- Look carefully and see if the earth, the community, and your collaborators have enough to share, feel comfortable sharing. Generosity, caring and stewardship is community resiliency itself.

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RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITIES

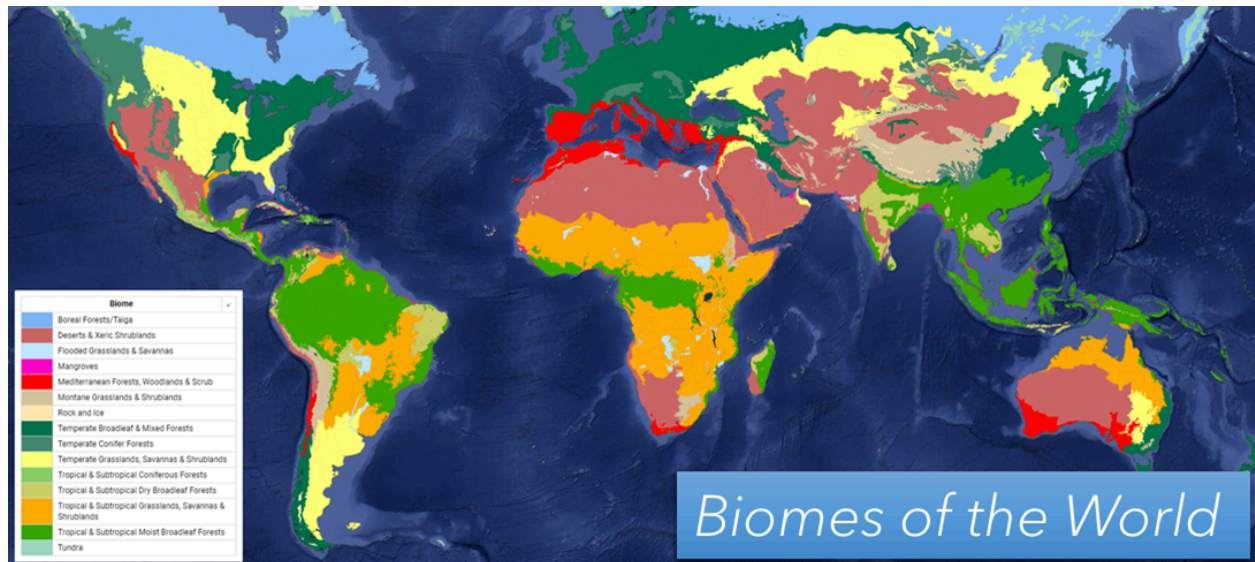
Plants don't live all alone in a place, they have ancient friends. In particular, animals and insects were also isolated to those places, evolving on their own to identify and rely upon local plants. These evolved dependencies are rich beyond our ability to fully comprehend. In our series, we focus on making it possible for those ancient community members to recognize each other and to begin reforming a vibrant natural community. In Michigan, we can look to the amazing work of the Michigan Natural Features Inventory project for insight into the plant species side of those communities. For insects, we can look to the kinds of work done by Doug Tallamy, which recognizes associations between insects and plants.

Ecological Levels of Organization



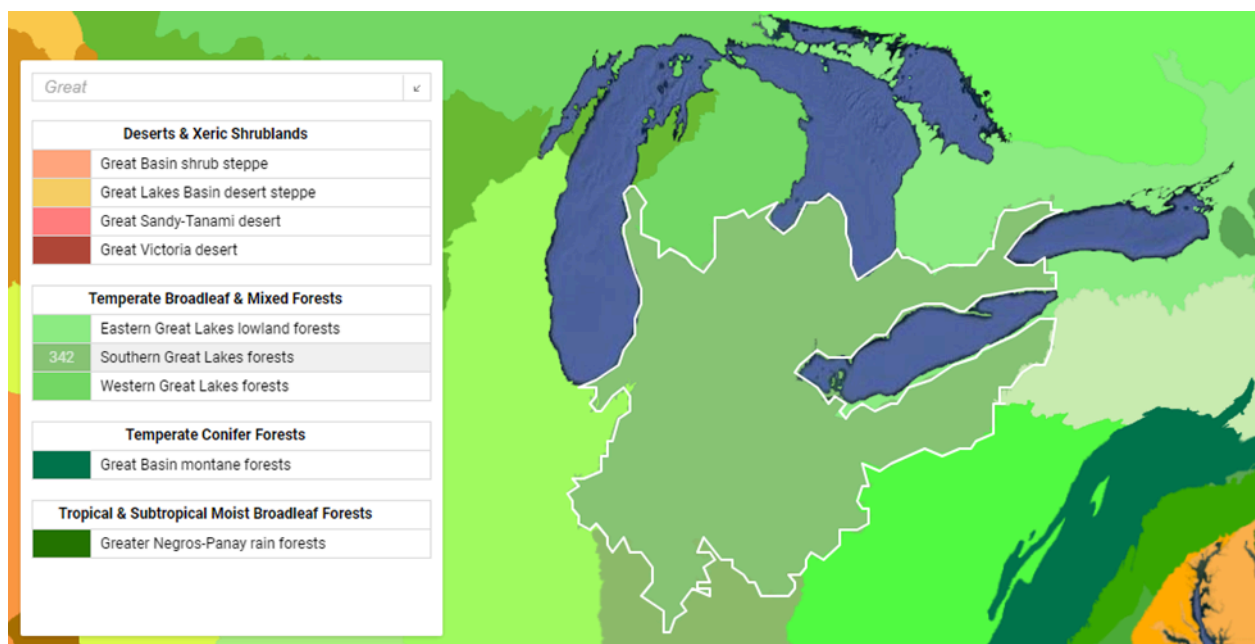
BIOMES: GLOBAL PATTERNS

From a global perspective, ecologists are searching for patterns that can inform our understanding of the world and the life in it. One such pattern is Biomes, which are broad regions across the world with similar climates. Areas with the same biome can be separated by large distances. Washtenaw County is located in a biome called *Temperate Broadleaf & Mixed Forests*. Note the dark green color is also located in Europe and Asia.



ECOREGION: REGIONAL PATTERNS

While the climate might be similar across any particular biome, the composition of species usually varies extensively due to extended periods of isolation, continuous evolution, and species specialization. Plants from Europe and Asia might grow well in our climate, but they don't have any of the species associations that locally native species do. Insects in our region just do not recognize plants from far away and will generally not be able to use them. Ecoregions are another pattern that can help us understand the special nature of our place in the world. In contrast to biomes, an ecoregion is at a much smaller geographic scale and is focused by all those species associations. Washtenaw County is in the Southern Great Lakes forests ecoregion.



COMMUNITY SEED SELECTION

The name Seeds To Community is intended to suggest that we are all about using seeds to build diverse natural communities. Because of years of geographic isolation, evolution, and lots of specialization, rich natural communities rely upon local native plants. With this in mind, one of the most important starting questions is “*Which seeds?*”

COMMUNITY SEED COLLECTION GUIDANCE

For our series, here is our guidance for selecting seeds to collect, plants to put in your ground, and what to share with others:

- Share species local and native to our region. Genetic diversity is a deep source of local evolutionary wisdom and key for adapting to changing climate. Choose locally native species that evolved in your place.
- Know exactly what species you are collecting. The Latin names are soooo helpful, as they are uncomplicated by regional duplications and are safe to search with.
- Never take from protected species or from protected places without permission. Protecting the communities in those places is of primary importance.
- Do not share cultivars, clones, and crossbred species. Avoid any plant with a quoted name. My ‘Crimson King’ is both from Europe and a clone. Crossbred species are a combination of genetics from multiple species, usually from completely different parts of the world.
- Plan ahead and collect only when the seed is mature. The window for collection is highly variable among species, ranging from only a few days to several weeks or longer. Most mature seed material is dull in color and small in size, often surrounded by dried plant material.
- Only share seeds with confident IDs. Work with other community members to complete identification, including at our events. Be careful of look-alikes, common name confusion, and invasive species.
- Botany is so complicated ... Go slow and pace yourself. Distinctive plant characteristics are soooo complicated. The science of plant structures and genetics is vast and arcane. Names can feel obscure and the entire domain can feel foreign. Walk softly and be grateful.