

Protecting Nebraska's seed libraries from regulation under the Nebraska Seed Law:

What you can do to help

Seed libraries are community-based organizations that support local, resilient food systems by promoting seed saving, providing free access to seeds, and educating the community about the importance of seeds and genetic diversity in our food system.

How do they work? Seed libraries work just like book libraries. There are 5 simple steps to using a seed library:

1. Check out seeds
2. Plant and grow them at home
3. Harvest your crops
4. Save seeds from a few plants
5. Donate saved seeds back to the seed library



Why are they important? Over the past 100 years, we've lost 75% of our crop genetic diversity. The narrowing genetic pool of seeds threatens our ability to access the seed we need to feed ourselves with nutritious crops. Seed libraries are vital components of a more local, diverse, and resilient food system where genetic diversity is celebrated and protected through saving and sharing locally adapted seeds. Seed libraries promote a more equitable and sustainable food system by promoting people's rights to share seeds with each other and supporting people's rights to healthy food through free seeds.



Why do seed libraries need to be protected? Seed libraries in Nebraska, and in several other states, are currently at risk of being closed unless they drastically change the way they operate. The Nebraska Department of Agriculture says that according to the state's seed law, seed libraries can only share locally saved seed if they comply with the state seed law's labeling, testing, and permitting requirements. This is a very expensive, and unnecessary, process that will likely result in seed libraries not being able to receive or share locally saved seeds.

What is the Nebraska Seed Law? Each state in the United States has a seed law. In Nebraska, this law is called the Nebraska Seed Law (Neb. Rev. Stat. §§81-2, 147 to 81-2, 147.12) and is administered by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. The Nebraska Seed Law regulates how seeds are packaged, labeled, marketed, and sold within the state. The law states that anyone who sells seed within the state must apply for a permit, conduct germination tests, and label seed containers according to the law. The law does not distinguish between commercial sales of seed and the free sharing or donation of seeds.

How does the seed law affect seed libraries? According to the state department of agriculture, seed libraries must comply with the state's seed law in order to accept donations and freely share seed that is saved by community members. This means that seed libraries will have to get and pay for a seed permit from the department of agriculture. Seed libraries will also have to follow burdensome labeling requirements for each packet of seed shared through the

library. Most importantly, seed libraries will have to conduct germination tests before sharing seeds, which is a process that is not only expensive but also requires roughly 400 seeds. This requirement alone makes seed sharing through a library impossible since seed library collections hardly ever maintain that many seeds of each variety. These requirements, put together, restrict people's abilities to share seeds with each other through seed libraries.

What is being done to save seed libraries? In response to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture's enforcement of the state seed law against seed libraries, there is an effort among seed librarians, resilient food system advocates, and state legislators to change the Nebraska Seed Law **to expressly exempt seed libraries from regulation under the law**. This law will be introduced in the Nebraska Legislature in January, 2015 and will need your support in order to pass and become law.

What can I do to support these efforts? You can support seed libraries in three ways:

1. Sign the online petition at www.legalizeseeds.org to show your support for seed libraries by asking state departments of agriculture to stop regulating seed libraries under their seed laws.
2. Write a letter to your legislator urging them to support legislation that will change Nebraska's Seed Law to expressly exempt seed libraries from any permitting, labeling, and testing requirements.
3. Share the petition with your networks, via social media ([#shareseeds](https://twitter.com/shareseeds)), and encourage others to write letters of support for the legislation that will change Nebraska's law to protect seed sharing through seed libraries.



For more information, visit www.theselc.org/legalizeseeds

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