

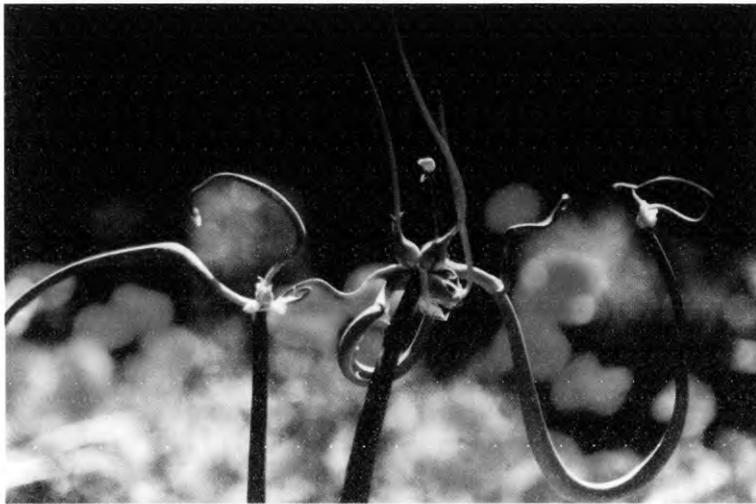
The Seed Savers' Network

Michel Fanton, co-director of the Seed Savers' Network, writes on how a small environmental organisation collects and catalogues its specialist library

The Seed Savers' Network is actively preserving agricultural biodiversity in collaboration with farmers, gardeners and community groups. Live seeds are the focus, and education is an important strategy.

'Modern biotechnology — genetic engineering — is an assault on life, not an altruistic exercise in curiosity but a demand to control.' Brewster Kneen *Farmageddon* New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC, Canada, 1999.

Egyptian or Walking Onion (*Allium Proliferum*)



Summer vegetable harvest

Six thousand gardeners have been involved in the program since it started in 1986. The organisation is funded by members' subscriptions and sales of the *Handbook*, 18 000 of which have been sold since 1993 (four prints); more than four hundred libraries have copies. (ISBN 0-646-10226-5)

Seed Savers is based in Byron Bay, on a permaculture acre with seed production gardens, seed bank, office and small training facilities.

In recent years, The Network has fostered similar networks in The Solomon Islands, Tonga, Cuba, Cambodia and in several countries of south-eastern Africa. It continues to assist non-government organisations in other developing countries, and provides training to overseas seed savers.

The library

Because of the research component of our work, a specialised library is an invaluable tool. Our book collection started to be classified four years ago by volunteers. They entered the data in a growing number of exercise books, with all the usual information, as well as whether the book was dedicated and notes on its condition. The volunteer team is about to enter the information in a database with a short summary and cross-referencing with key words. We plan to publish it on our website [<http://www.seedsavers.net>] for aid workers to consult. This may lead to a question and answer service.

Our books are not covered and have only scotch-taped labels on their spines. We are willing to purchase, or accept donations of, used library paraphernalia and cancelled books.

In a similar manner the original seeds in the seed bank are also inventoried and loaned to members for re-growing.

The book library contains old seed catalogues and 1500 volumes focussing on organic gardening, farming, seed saving and turn of the century works on the usage of plants. Because French is my mother tongue and I can read some Spanish, there are several books in those languages.

The library is housed alongside the offices and seed bank in suburban Byron Bay, and is used by trainees, volunteers, travelling researchers, visiting members of Seed Savers and of course by the residents of The Seed Centre.

As a small self-funded educational trust, an ethno-botanical reference library specialising in useful plants has been an important part of our growth for the last thirteen years. Librarians are welcome to be part of the solution. E-mail us at info@seedsavers.net, fax us on 02 6685 6624, talk to us on 02 6685 7560, or visit <http://www.seedsavers.net>. ■

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The conference proceedings include papers for all except six sessions, and the abstracts of these recalcitrant papers are included. The papers are arranged with the opening and plenary sessions in the first section followed by all other papers in alphabetical order by main author.

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