

News from Nova Scotia

News from Cape Breton Regional Library

Christine Thomson, CBRL Programs and Events, Cape Breton Regional Library

CBRL Seed Library a growing success!

Our first attempt to start an in-person Seed Library in April 2020 was disrupted by the Covid pandemic's first lockdown, so we switched to distanced online preparation, launch, and ordering. By mid-May 2020, we had to stop receiving orders after we had received 540 orders in 2 days, and we would run out of many seeds part way through the process of filling those orders. We are happy to say that we were more prepared for the 2021 CBRL Seed Library! We ordered a



lot more seeds, staff and volunteers helped to package over 18,000 seed packets (so we wouldn't run out!), we set up a great [online ordering site](#) that kept track of inventory to mark seed varieties as Sold Out when they were gone, and launched 2 weeks earlier on Wed April 28th to give people more time to start tomatoes indoors.



With 28 vegetable and companion flower seeds available, some common popular varieties and some less common Heritage varieties, there was something for everyone. We allowed one order per household with a maximum of 10 packets (1/variety). By mid-May 2021, over 1500 complete orders have been filled for Cape Breton and Victoria County households, and we expect to receive orders daily for a few weeks yet! Varieties with limited quantities went quickly, but there are still supplies of many peas, winter and summer squashes and greens (lettuces,

kales and spinach) available. Some of these extra packages can be saved to start out next year's seed library, but many will be shared with the Good Food Bus in Cape Breton to include in their food baskets, as part of growing kits with soil and pots included. There will be a lot more vegetables grown in Cape Breton this summer!

To be eligible to receive these free seeds, you needed to live in Cape Breton and Victoria Counties in Nova Scotia, and have a CBRL library card (or apply for one). We welcomed hundreds of new library members as a result of this project. We did receive orders from hopeful gardeners from other parts of Cape Breton as well, and from the Mainland as far away as Halifax, Wolfville, and Amherst, but could not expand our reach that far for fear of opening the floodgates!

Perhaps a Seed Library is a project that other regions would like to pursue in the future. It has required substantial financial support from the Dept of Communities, Culture and Heritage's funds that encourage food literacy and food security in Nova Scotia, for which we are most grateful! It has also required a lot of preparation time that was generously given to the project by many staff members and community volunteers over the past 3 months. They have helped package and label seeds, as well as offered staff time to fill and mail the seed orders or prepare them for curbside pick-up during our 3rd wave lockdown!



This has been a wonderful service for beginner gardeners as well as those with some experience wanting to try new varieties or get back into gardening. We hope that the CBRL Seed Library will continue to encourage people to get out into their home gardens even after Covid restrictions end. In the future, we hope there will be more sharing of seeds among gardeners, more in-person or online educational components about gardening, seed saving and Heritage varieties, once restrictions ease. The gardening community is a sharing one, and where better than the Library to get information and support!

