



# Sandoval Extension Master Gardener Newsletter

<http://sandovalmastergardeners.org/>



New Mexico State University • Cooperative Extension Service • U.S. Department of Agriculture

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January

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Department of  
Agriculture cooperating.

**SEMG Newsletter  
Submissions  
Deadline: 25<sup>th</sup> each mo.**

Please submit news,  
articles, events and  
photographs to:  
[newsletter@sandovalmastergardeners.org](mailto:newsletter@sandovalmastergardeners.org)

Editor:  
Kate Shadock

Happy New Year! I am not sure whether it's getting older or the pandemic, but these past few years have really become jumbled for me; both extraordinarily extended and surprisingly short. But there is one constant: right before the new year begins, the catalogs arrive. Seed catalogs. They're like porn for gardeners and anyone tired of the winter dreariness! Those bright beautiful colors and textures and ideals are right there for us all to see and to imagine growing in our own gardens.

My family and I are new residents in this Land of Enchantment. When we moved here in 2018, one of the first gifts we received was a beautiful piece of pottery from Acoma. I still remember unwrapping it, admiring its intricate black and white patterns and the animals around its base... and wondering why in the world would you make a pot with such a tiny hole on top? We were told that this was a seed pot. People had to save their seeds for next year's planting. There were no seed catalogs then. Seed saving was imperative for their survival. The best seeds would be funneled into the tiny hole in the pot, then the hole sealed, to protect those seeds from other critters who need to eat during the long winter too. When it came time to plant, these beautiful pots were broken, and the seeds released.



*I think I remember what these seeds are.  
Definitely not the best way to save seeds!*

How times have changed! We can be awash in seeds - seeds that are native to New Mexico and seeds that aren't. We can order seeds for plants that don't stand a chance in our high desert climate, but we'll try them anyway. The catalogs and store seed displays allow us to order our heart's desires.

I have seeds saved from this past year on my kitchen windowsill now. We will plant those since they originated here. Having grown either in our yard or close by, they are climatized for our location. Seeds are miraculous in that regard! My husband dreams with the catalogs, and has probably already dog-eared a multitude of pages. I will visit the seed library at the Corrales Library - a great - and free resource. We have a new project beginning this year, the **Sandoval Seed Share and Swap**, which will help us all learn to save (and share!) seeds, an important step in food sovereignty and in preserving food culture. Part of this project includes a seed cabinet that is already well stocked with many varieties of seeds in the lobby of the Sandoval County Office Building at 1500 Idalia Road - more free seeds! Both locations also have gardening information available.

It is time to dream of the gardens to be - all beginning with those small packages of DNA and life that we know as seeds. Whether you save your own seeds, buy from catalogs and stores, or visit our county's seed libraries, I wish you happy dreaming and planning this month! ~ Meg

## Down & Dirty with Rachel-Sandoval County Extension Agent

When my brother and I were younger, my parents would give us each eight cents on the first night of Hanukkah and double the amount they gave us each night. By the eighth night, we had received a total of \$20.40 and a better understanding of exponential growth. (Even holidays were educational in my house.) My parents knew enough about exponential growth to know that this present was safe for eight days but not much longer. They also told us the story of the man who made a chessboard for a king and as payment asked for one grain of rice on the first square, two grains on the second square, four on the third, and so on for all sixty-four squares. The king accepted before realizing the impossible deal he had made. He was to owe the chessboard maker 9,223,372,036,854,775,808 grains of rice on the 64<sup>th</sup> square and 18,446,744,073,709,551,615 grains total. That’s approximately 9 and 18 quintillion grains, respectively.



*The eighth night or Hanukkah fell on Christmas this year.*

*Photo: R. Zweig*

The farmer-mathematician in me wondered how long it would take the king to amass this amount of rice if he saved seeds. If we assume that each grain of rice planted germinates and grows into a healthy plant, then 270 grains per plant is reasonable. By replanting each grain that is produced, the king could pay off his debt on the eighth year, from a purely mathematical point of view. However, if we consider that one rice grain is approximately .025 milligrams and consider global rice production, we are looking at anywhere from 860 to 1370 years, depending on how productive our rice cultivation is. (You can get in touch with me if you want the nitty-gritty of my calculations.)

The king may, however, breed a new variety of rice that produces lots and lots of tiny grains in a small area in order to pay his debt quickly. Humans have been saving seeds and breeding plants for around 10,000 years. You, too, can save seeds from your garden and select for plant traits that you like. Master Gardener Sam Thompson has been saving seeds for years and now grows plump, tasty tomatoes that thrive in our climate (see picture). Saving seeds is a great way to ensure an adequate seed supply, contribute to a greater diversity of cultivars, grow plants to your taste, and have fun, among others. New Mexico State University has a few resources on saving seeds. Check out this [Southwest Yard & Garden post](#) and this [Extension publication](#). I also recommend the book *The Seed Garden: The Art and Practice of Seed Saving*, by Lee Buttala, Micaela Colley, Shanyn Siegel, Jared Zystro. It is an interesting read even if you aren’t into seed saving. For instance, did you know that acorn squash and summer squash are the same species (*Cucurbita pepo*), but butternut squash is a different species (*Cucurbita moschata*)? Happy New Year and may you grow some royally delicious veggies this year.



*Master Gardener Sam Thompson has been saving seeds from the Paul Robeson variety of tomato to select for plants that bear smaller fruits that mature earlier in the season (left) compared to the larger, later-maturing fruits typical of the Paul Robeson variety (right).*

*Photo: S. Thompsom*

Note: I realized I made a typo in last month’s puzzler. The correct puzzler and answer are below.

Last month’s puzzler: If 1 = 5,  
 2 = 6,  
 3 = 7,  
 4 = 8,  
 Then 5 = ?

*Last month’s answer: 1, because 1 = 5.*

### This month’s puzzler:

A man was looking at a picture and says, “Brothers or sisters, I have none, but this man's father is my father's son”. Who is the man in the picture?

## January Garden Checklist

1. Water prior to a freeze (<https://aces.nmsu.edu/ces/yard/2005/110505.html>)
2. Start new compost bin (<https://aces.nmsu.edu/county/bernalillomastercomposter/>)
3. Repot house plants (<https://desertblooms.nmsu.edu/documents/houseplants-b.pdf>)
4. Add accents to the garden
5. Fertilize annuals

*Source: HGTV Garden – January Tasks*

## Public Training Opportunities

### Ready, Set, Grow

The first webinar is **January 18<sup>th</sup> on Designing a Habitat Garden**, presented by Judith Phillips. Details on the first three webinars of the year and how to register are on the website below. You need to register for each webinar you want to attend in order to get the Zoom passcode. These are free sessions. [Register separately for each session at https://desertblooms.nmsu.edu/grow.html](https://desertblooms.nmsu.edu/grow.html)

### Gardening With The Masters – Meadowlark Senior Center

Upcoming, in-person, classes, held at Meadowlark Senior Center at 7pm the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month. These classes are not recorded. We encourage you to join us in person so your individual questions get answered.

January 24	Year Round Color in the Garden	Kate Shadock, Master Gardener
February 28	Wine Making For the Home Gardener	Suzanne Bollenbach, Master Gardener
March 28	Everyone Can Grow Tomatoes	Sam Thompson, Master Gardener

### ESTHER BONE LIBRARY

Tuesday - February 7 at 10am  
 Esther Bone Library  
 950 Pinetree  
 Rio Rancho

Kevin Konetzni will present a talk on raised bed gardening.

The presentation will focus on the benefits of raised bed gardening. Construction techniques, types of raised beds, materials and lessons learned will also be discussed.

[This presentation is open to the public and free of charge.](#)

### Pre-recorded Classes

Courtesy of COVID we adapted some of our in-person classes to Zoom, recorded them and they are available at <https://sandovalmastergardeners.org/gardening-classes/gardening-with-the-masters-online/>

## Over The Garden Wall: Seed Detective Travels The World Tracking Down Lost Crops

*Photography courtesy of Jesse Alexander and Adam Alexander.*



Adam Alexander travels the world looking for new seeds to add to his collection, an act he believes ties us to our ancestors. You'd expect someone once nicknamed the "Indiana Jones of seeds" to be a bit fanatical and dedicated to the job. But for Adam Alexander, author and horticulturist, seeds are more than just a job, hobby or passion. They're a lifeline.

Seeds "are a visceral connection that I have with my most distant ancestors. It takes me back way beyond civilization," says Alexander. "When you save your own seeds...you grow them for yourself and also share them; you are observing this cycle from seed to crop to saving endlessly going round and round. And that is something that connects me directly with those neolithic farmers."

In his new book, *The Seed Detective* (which shares a name with [his website](#)), Alexander dives into the history behind vegetables while traveling the world hunting for their seeds. Over the years, he amassed quite a collection, now boasting seeds for more than 500 plant varieties, from which he grows 70 to 100 different crops each year in his home garden in eastern Wales.

The seed detective has collected seeds from around the world, building up a collection of little-known heritage varieties, as well as those plants on the edge of becoming lost. So far, that's included garlic from Oman, peppers from Morocco and blue maize from a Hopi farmer in Arizona. He's had plenty of successes germinating and rooting those seeds in the Welsh countryside—even making blue polenta out of the corn. Of course, not everything goes so smoothly. The landscape and climate of Wales is quite different from Arizona, after all.

Take the chilis he found in Singapore years ago. "I can't get those damn things to flower," he says. "They miss Singapore. I think I've got a message which is 'Adam, that's just one step too far.' But I haven't given up, I'll put it that way."

Alexander doesn't give up easily. He's continuing to try with those chili seeds, just like he experiments with all the seeds he collects. And even when the plants do successfully root, he knows they'll not grow the same as in their native habitat. "It won't taste quite the same, it won't have grown in quite the same way. But what it is, for me, more than anything else, is a memory," he says.

Many of those memories are of the places and people he's visited while traveling to find the seeds. Often, people are happy to share their love of gardening and plants with him, eager to showcase their heirloom offerings. Other times, there's more confusion or annoyance with his requests, like a funny exchange with an older woman selling goods at a market in Laos.

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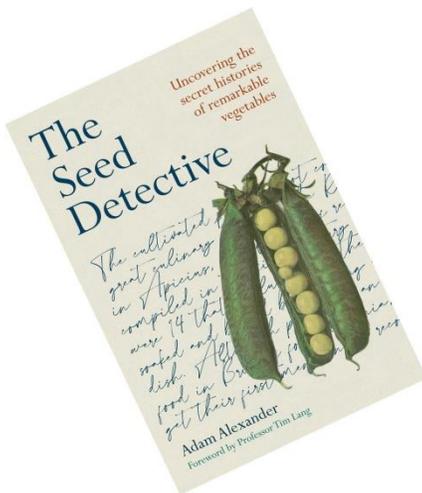
As Alexander writes, he tried to engage the woman in a conversation, asking about the bag of seeds hanging from her stall. “Are those pea seeds?” he asked through a translator. “Of course,” the woman replied. According to Alexander, she said it “in a very irritated tone as if speaking to a very small and stupid child.” He kept trying to find out more about the seeds, asking how tall they grow, how long the woman has been growing them, what part of the plant she eats. On and on he probed with basic questions, while the woman’s answers stayed as close to monosyllabic as possible. He said he could practically feel the daggers she seemed to shoot out of her eyes at him. Eventually, he was able to simply buy a bag of the seeds and take his chances with them when he got them home.



Alexander’s garden.

“The last thing she was expecting is some old geezer to start asking idiotic questions,” Alexander recalls. But those kinds of conversations, fumbling as they may be, can lead to great discoveries. “To me, my garden is an ark. There are things that are growing in it that are highly endangered. And if I didn’t grow them, I don’t know what would be happening to them.”

While each seed that Alexander grows might originally be suited to a different area of the world, he encourages people to try seed swapping, with friends and neighbors or as part of a larger club. He even shares seeds through his website, making his entire catalog available to peruse online. (He does ask for a donation to cover the cost of shipping.)



Not only does he believe that fresh produce is tastier, but he says the plants can become locally adapted. It’s part of what Alexander would like to see as a new green revolution, with communities prioritizing feeding themselves, putting the land and climate front and center. Rather than “paying multinationals huge amounts of money,” as Alexander says, for food and seeds, you can take steps toward moving your food systems into your own control.

By reinforcing the connection between what we grow and what we eat, we are reinforcing our values and priorities. As Alexander writes in the book: “Saving seeds from one’s own crops inspires us to think more deeply about the food choices we make.”

Link to original article: [This Seed Detective Travels the World Tracking Down Lost Crops - Modern Farmer](#)

**“Gardening is cheaper than therapy,  
and you get the tomatoes!”**

~Author unknown

## Over The Garden Wall

### The Inventor of the Sugar Snap Pea Has a Farm...

*Yes, someone invented the sugar snap pea!*

Every spring, the sugar snap peas at Magic Seed Farm in Twin Falls, Idaho, burst from the dirt like an alarm clock, signaling the upcoming summer bounty. For owner Rod Lamborn, these snap peas are a living tribute to his father, Dr. Calvin Lamborn, the man who invented them.



At Magic Seed farm, the immense variety of sugar snap peas are a living celebration of their late creator, Dr. Calvin Lamborn.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that sugar snap peas have occurred naturally forever. But this specific breed was invented by Dr. Lamborn in 1979, after years of trying to create a commercially viable snow pea with a smoother, straighter pod. Rod grew up here, witness to his father's obsession and the excitement he felt whenever he successfully engineered a new variety.

"My dad was fascinated by these plants," Rod remembers. His father developed hundreds of unique varieties of sugar snap peas throughout his life, documenting the genetic differences that resulted in an infinite array of colorful pods—yellow, magenta, purple with speckles—orchid-like flowers, and winding, edible tendrils.

Orchid-like snap pea flowers



After a serendipitous meeting with chef Wylie Dufresne in the early 2000s, the Lamborns were connected with Sweet Berry Farms in upstate New York, where their snap peas were planted and ultimately distributed to top restaurants across the country, including Per Se, WD-50, and the French Laundry. Today, Magic Seed is home to more than 900 varieties of peas, and it sells more than a million pounds of seeds to commercial farms each year.

After Dr. Lamborn passed away in 2017, Rod took over the farm, studying the genetic variations of the peas and poring through his father's journals, a process he says has given him a deeper glimpse into his dad's passion. "I miss my father," Rod says, "but I feel connected to him through continuing his work."

Link to original article <https://www.saveur.com/inventor-sugar-snap-pea/>

## Does Gardening Count as Exercise?

According to the Second Edition of the **Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans** at health.gov, adults need 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intense aerobic activity each week. They also need muscle-strengthening activities such as resistance training twice a week. Gardening chores such as mowing, weeding, digging, planting, raking, trimming branches, carrying bags of mulch or compost, and applying said bags can all count toward weekly activity. The Physical Activity Guidelines also state activities can be done in bursts of ten-minute periods spread throughout the week.

### Garden Themed Workout

So how can gardening chores be enhanced to achieve maximum health benefits? Here are some ways to exercise while gardening and tips to add momentum to your gardening workout: Do some stretches before heading out to do yardwork to warm up muscles and prevent injury. Do your own mowing instead of hiring. Skip the riding mower and stick with a push mower (unless you have acreage, of course). Mulching mowers also benefit the lawn. Keep your lawn tidy with a weekly raking. Instead of holding the rake the same way with each stroke, alternate arms to balance the effort. (Same when sweeping) When lifting heavy bags use the large muscles in your legs, rather than your back. Exaggerate gardening movements for extra oomph. Lengthen a stretch to reach a branch or add some skips to your steps across the lawn. Digging works major muscle groups while aerating the soil. Exaggerate the motion to increase the benefit. When hand watering walk in place or walk back and forth instead of standing still. Get an intense leg work out by squatting to pull weeds rather than kneeling. Take frequent breaks and stay hydrated. Remember, even ten minutes of an activity counts.

### Health Benefits of Gardening for Exercise

According to Harvard Health Publications, 30 minutes of general gardening for a 155-pound person can burn 167 calories, more than water aerobics at 149. Mowing the lawn with a push mower can expend 205 calories, the same as disco dancing. Digging in the dirt can use up 186 calories, on par with skateboarding.

Read more at Gardening Know How: Garden Themed Workout: Ways To Exercise While Gardening <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/lifestyle/garden-themed-workout.htm>

Additional information on movement and health: <https://pubs.nmsu.edu/i/1101/>

## Welcome Class of 2023

The Sandoval Extension Master Gardener class of 2023 has officially started! Welcome to our new interns. Each team has the full support of assigned and experienced mentors. Please remember to use your mentors!

## Training Opportunities for Members and Interns Only

Greenhouse Growing with Dr. Curtis Smith  
January 20, 2023 1-3pm  
Martha Liebert Library  
134 Calle Malinche  
Bernalillo

This class is open to master gardener veterans and interns only. This class does require prior registration.

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## HELP WANTED #1

### Education Committee – Videographer/Film Editor

For the 2022/2023 SEMG business year we will be filming guest lectures on advanced training topics. To record these sessions we are seeking members with experience and/or interest in videography and film editing. For more information please contact John Thompson, via his contact information in the member directory.

## HELP WANTED #2

We still have need of volunteers to cover the **Helpline** this is online, from the comfort of your own home. Each week of coverage earns 10 hours of Outreach credit. For more information contact Penny Lindgren or Sandra Liakus via their email or phone numbers in the member roster.

## HELP WANTED #3 Co-Chair Needed

Project is Sandoval County Administrative Building Plant Watering/Maintenance

- Backup for watering schedule
- Assistance analyzing plant problems
- Help resolve plant issues in the building
- Annual repotting coordination

## HELP WANTED #4 Co-Chair Needed

SANDOVAL SEED SHARE PROJECT

- Seek seed donations from large companies.
- Analyze seeds for viability in Sandoval County
- Assist in packaging and distributing seeds

**There are no gardening mistakes,  
Only experiments!**

*~Janet Kilburn Phillips*

