

Patented Life: Sharing Gardening Seeds Illegal in 30% Of US States



It is time for some outdated, unconstitutional laws to be scrapped. **Informally sharing seed with a neighbor who gardens down the street is illegal in multiple states in the US. The penalty for violating this ridiculous law is a fine of up to \$7,500 a day.** Like so many other senseless laws, this rule needs to be put to rest.

You can't even give away seeds to someone in your own neighborhood under certain laws. For example, in Minnesota, where seed laws on the books are so laughable that unless you buy an annual permit and submit each lot of seeds for germination testing, you are defying the law. You even have to attach an appropriate label, even if you aren't sharing the seeds with a local seed sharing library and just want to give them to your daughter-in-law for her new garden.

Even the 300 seed libraries throughout the US can't give away seeds or facilitate the exchange of seeds between organic gardeners unless they purchase a permit.

If this smacks of corporate farming infiltration to you, you aren't alone. **just 6 companies in the world have patented most of the seeds grown in the entire global agricultural market. Our food diversity is crumbling** and it's largely because corporations, not people, are in charge of the supply.

Neil Thapar, an attorney for the Sustainable Economics Law Center, has reviewed laws like these in 30 states so far and found that many of them define seed sharing without a permit as an illegal act.

People have been saving and sharing seeds for millennia. It isn't just our grandparents and great-grandparents who saved and exchanged seed – it has been practiced among farmers and gardeners since we first became an agrarian society.

More importantly, it is a vital practice which must be protected, not only because of biotech seed monopolies, but because gardeners in each area of the world are keenly aware of which kind of organic, heirloom seeds grow best, and are especially adapted to their climates. We can't let corporations and even government agencies like the USDA **regulate non-GMO, organic seed banks** to death.

Keeping seed exchanges local ensures a better food supply, that is not tainted by corporate interests, but also

that will allow the smaller farmer and gardener to grow better food. Never has planting an organic garden been such an act of defiance against corruption.

According to EcoLife:

“[Seed saving and exchange] is a great way to preserve what is left of the diverse, exotic, and interesting of our food and flower history. Some are forming seed exchanges through local libraries like . . . while others are organizing their efforts through online seed swap groups.”

Additional Sources:

Mother Earth News April-May 2015 Issue, p. 4

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About Christina Sarich:

Christina Sarich is a humanitarian and freelance writer helping you to Wake up Your Sleepy Little Head, and See the Big Picture. Her blog is Yoga for the New World. Her latest book is Pharma Sutra: Healing the Body And Mind Through the Art of Yoga.

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