

Seedpedia

Why did I receive this Project Summary?

Because you are a professional or an activist playing a leadership role in current efforts to preserve the genetic diversity of the world's plant species which humans use for food, pharmacology, and industry. Please forward this to other potential project participants who you deem appropriate.

This document will not focus on the nature of the larger problem, but instead on why Seedpedia is a critical system that will help those working on a global solution.

What is Seedpedia?

A comprehensive, online, open-source, tracking system for germplasm used for food, pharmacological, and industrial applications, for use by Seed Banks, NGOs, Researchers, Exchanges, Seed Companies, and individuals under a Creative Commons license. The system will provide a variety of tools for data exchange, research, project coordination, and public outreach, uniting networks of people committed to preserving our genetic heritage while educating people about the value of genetic – and associated cultural – diversity.

Why do we need Seedpedia?

Many governmental and NGO efforts to preserve genetic diversity already exist, such as seed banks, seed saving networks, and a variety of databases around the world. However, the quality of these efforts ranges considerably, and the level of coordination between them is either poor, or non-existent.

We have no gathering place for researchers find definitive information on taxonomy, useful traits, derived hybrids (or parents), images, cultural aspects, and sources to easily obtain a sample when appropriate. There is no simple system for coordination amongst people who are focusing on preserving (or simply studying) assorted varieties (or species, genus, or families), either *ex situ* or *in situ*.

To succeed, we must create a simple, freely and universally accessible tool that will help people to learn about the issue and coordinate their efforts. Without this, many seed banks and would-be seed savers focus their efforts on well-known varieties, replicating efforts and wasting resources while the most experienced activists make valiant efforts to single-handedly save obscure ones. This approach isn't working, and we're running out of time. The introduction of GMOs into the biosphere makes the need even more urgent.

Any long-term solution will rely upon the awareness and involvement of the many cultures and nations that populate the planet. The philosophy of constructing tools that are only meant to be used by a select subset of expert technocrats is a big part of how we got into this situation to begin with. Therefore, while the system must provide tools robust enough to fulfill the dreams of the major seed banks and NGOs, any proposed solution must be accessible to anyone with a computer and access to a network, anywhere in the world. The interface must be simple and intuitive, and secure from vandalism or attacks from entrenched interests, while at the same time absolutely protecting participants' privacy. This is what we will build.

There must be accommodations for exchanging data with areas that are off the edge of the Internet, and a rational strategy for placing precious hardware resources in communities that would otherwise be left behind. The system must – and will – eventually operate in the major languages beyond English, such as Chinese, Hindi, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and French.

Think of Wikipedia meets Google, and you have a pretty good idea of what this can look like. Individuals or organizations have logins from which to interact in one or more roles in the network. Responsible seed companies and other merchants will be invited to participate, and users will be able to purchase seeds, merchandise or services online as part of the strategy to make the project self-sustaining.

What are the Key Features of Seedpedia?

Imagining the feature set of the project is an exciting exercise. There is great potential to collaborate with existing projects such as Wikispecies. The first stages of implementation will include the following key features:

- Comprehensive collection/holdings tracking database
- Exhaustive taxonomic characteristics & propagation database
- Comprehensive Usage/Characteristics database
- Cultural/Naming Ethnobotanical database
- Images database: Seed, plant, flower, application
- Open-Source Hybrid Project space
- Expert-Moderated wiki approach to population of database
- Upload facility for large sets of verified data
- Comprehensive data reporting/export facility
- Participant registration controlled by participant
- Flexible Access control at all levels/ranges of factors, secure where required
- Commercial Suppliers/Organic Sources database
- Seedsavers Project Collaboration Areas & List Hosting
- Seedsavers Global/Regional Event Calendar/Email Notifier
- Seedsavers Commons areas & Resource Library for educational partners
- Newswire RSS feed of/for participants and interested parties

We can create the planet's foremost resource for seeds, and anything related to them, while reversing the loss of our planet's genetic heritage in crucial areas of human activity. It will be free to all users.

Join us.

How can I help?

The Seedpedia project is in its formative stages at the moment, and is lining up participants to help with every aspect of the planning, design, building, and operation of the system. We're looking for volunteers, in-kind assistance, and monetary donations. Specific roles for key volunteers we need immediately include:

- Advisory Board Members
- 501(c)3 Fiscal Sponsor in the USA
- Networking, Telecom & Hosting Support
- PHP & SQL DB Design/Build Support
- Graphic Design Support
- Language Localization Support
- Fundraising Support
- Marketing & Outreach Support

Who should I contact?

For more information, please contact Brian Allen at brian@seedpedia.org, or at +1 (206) 605-3008.

Who is Brian Allen?

Brian Allen has spent over 20 years helping corporate, government and non-profit clients with their technology needs, including Information Systems, Networking/Telecommunications, Energy, and Broadcast Media, on every continent except Antarctica

Brian is originally from Milwaukee, WI, and has lived and worked across the United States, Europe, and Latin America. He is currently managing the startup of The Appropriate Technology Group, LLC, a cooperative incubator dedicated to bringing together progressive community-minded economists and technologists in the food, building, energy, transportation, communications, and health care sectors.

His academic background is in political economy, international relations, and languages. He holds a BA in International Relations from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a Certificat d'Études Politiques from the Institute d'Études Politiques in Aix-en-Provence, France, and an MA in Economics and Latin American Studies from The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC.

In Washington, he has helped found or has served on the boards of directors of: the Washington Alpine Club, the Seattle Astronomical Society, The Seattle Soccer Referees Association, The Washington Alliance of Technology Workers, The Independent Media Center, The Northwest Ecobuilding Guild, The Green Party of Seattle, and the Green Party of Washington State, among others. He is a life member of the American Solar Energy Society, and currently manages membership and volunteer needs for Solar Washington.

Brian lives in Seattle, WA, in a house that is part of the Homestead Community Land Trust. He is working on renovating it into a model of urban permaculture, green building and energy self-sufficiency.