



CHRYSALIS UPDATE

April 2015

Seeds and Biodynamic Agriculture

Seeds can be divided into three categories: standard, hybrid, and genetically modified. Genetically modified (or GMO for genetically modified organism) is a seed that can only be created in the laboratory, where its genome has been altered to contain genes not normally found there. Hybrid seeds are the result of deliberately crossing two different parent varieties. Hybrid seeds cannot produce plants like the previous generation. The seeds saved from hybrid plants will either be sterile or have characteristics of one of the parent plants.

Standard, or non-hybrid, seeds are those without any human modifications or breeding. Heirloom seeds are a variety of standard seed. Heirloom seeds are old cultivars that have been maintained but not used in modern large-scale agriculture.

To propagate these seeds, the best plants of each year's harvest are selected to make the next year's seeds. The seed savers have repeated this

process for generations, calling naturally on what would produce the next year's best seeds. Typically heirlooms have adapted over time to whatever climate and soil they have grown in. Thus they are often resistant to local pests, diseases, and extremes of weather.

Using biodynamic agriculture at the Community Farm of Ann Arbor, our ideal is to save our own standard heirloom seeds. And we do! Each year we carefully select healthy plants and save those seeds. Saving seeds is a lot of work. Each year, we focus on a few plants, watching their formation, strength, and productivity. Some of the plants we save each year are string beans (purple, yellow, and green), kale, lettuces, arugula, leeks, cabbage, tomatoes, winter squash, herbs, and flowers. Since we cannot save all our own seeds, we are very grateful to the clean and healthy farms and distributors that dedicate their work to seed saving and sharing.

2015 Plans—and Save the Date!

Chrysalis will be continuing some of the favorite programs of previous years, with a few new additions. During the growing season look for plant studies, cooking and preserving classes, and bee classes. The usual classroom field trips and Steiner School 9th grade practicum are again on the schedule.

Two big events:

May 23: Festival and Farm Open House—more details coming soon, but save the date.

2015 Fundraiser: Chef Justin from Zingerman's will provide a meal at Community Farm. Date and info to be developed.

Help is always needed to make these events happen. Talk to Anne and come to a monthly Chrysalis work session. During growing season, meetings will be 4th Wednesday, 5-6:30 pm at the farm.

Volunteers are welcome and donations to Chrysalis are tax deductible.

Go to www.chrysalisbd.org for additional information about donating or volunteering.