

## How to make a seed donation for The 15th Garden:



The people living in the area's resisting dictator Assad have difficulties finding food. Often it is impossible to get food from elsewhere. But to grow your own food you need to have good seeds and also this is lacking. (See the earlier articles about the 15th Garden on ASEEDs website). For this reason The 15th Garden is collecting seeds and brings them to the areas where the network is active. But it is very important that the farmers and (city-)gardeners in Syria and

the surrounding refugee centres receive the right seeds! Seeds from crops that can be grown there, open pollinated seeds so people can start to save seeds by themselves and preferably seeds from veggies that people know and like.

To be able to collect seeds in the Netherlands as well we have been translating [the 'wishlist' with crops into English](#). A Dutch translation will follow soon. Farmers and garden projects prefer relatively large quantities of a few good crops instead of little bits of many varieties. (Those small quantities of special seeds you can better keep for a next seed swap in the Netherlands.)

The plants desired by the majority may be the following, this list is not exhaustive and proposals can be [further] studied / proposed:

- Musk-squash, pepo or maxima: The diversity of squashes is extremely low, only pumpkin squashes, orange or white-beige squashes, as well as 'long butternut with collar' were available before the war. Potimarron or butternut are little known.
- Courgettes: zucchini cousins of the types "gray of Algiers" or "white of Nice" are popular there, but the green and clear-green varieties are also widespread. They are harvested when the fruit is 10 to 20 cm long, and are often eaten stuffed.
- Cucumbers: very popular, cucumber is harvested when the fruit is 8 to 15 cm, and always eaten with the skin. Above all, the dark green cucumber with sweetened skin is preferred, but the Armenian cucumber is also very popular, and resistant to drought.
- Melons: the only 'encountered' [popular] melon is the yellow rugby ball shaped variety. It is very popular.
- Watermelons: very popular also, especially the big red watermelon with light green skin, or the smallest round and dark variety.
- Gourd: the gourd is grown for daily use, when the fruit is small, in order to be stuffed.
- Tomatoes: the most popular tomato is the Jabalyé, a large tomato of the 'Beef heart Brandywine' variety, it is light red and the size of an open hand. This model is the most sought after locally. We also find tomatoes of medium size, always red,

sometimes still green, but the other colours are not known and therefore little desired. Tomatoes are mostly eaten in salad or prepared in tomato concentrate. No one dries or stuffs tomatoes. Cherry tomatoes are little known and therefore have a bad image... There are still peasant varieties, but the habit is to buy seedlings from nurserymen, always hybrids.

- Peppers: very popular, peppers are eaten green and often raw. There are also red pepper creams. There are few varieties of yellow or orange. The fruits are often large, either pointed (horn type) or rather wide (rectangular).
- Chilli Peppers: very popular, eaten green and raw, with fruits in the shape of a point from 10 to 20 cm. There is not much chilli paste made, nor is there much cooking done with chilli peppers ... Instead, they are presented at table, raw, next to the dishes.
- Aubergines: very popular, they are cooked fried in strips, stuffed, stuffed with walnuts and conserved in oil, made into dips, poached, etc. We find the modern variety of very large dark violet fruits (the size of a handball), and also many varieties are harvested when the fruit is small and almost still in a ball or elongated. White, pale violet, pale violet streaked with white, white or dark purple. The long 'barbentane' is known, but the 'Violette of Florence' is more appreciated.
- Cabbages: big head cabbages are very popular, dark green, light green as well as red, 'cabus', Milan, Pontoise or 'pointus' ... They are very commonly cultivated. Broccoli sprouts are also known, but more rare. Other types of cabbage seem absent. But Chinese cabbage/napa cabbage and lacinato kale/cavalo nero could be successful a priori.
- Leeks: seem to be unknown to local farmers.
- Fennel: locally cultivated or wild varieties have fleshy stems and are harvested for their aromatic seeds.
- Lettuce: one finds almost only romaine lettuce, with large elongated leaves. They are practical to be served whole leaves at the table and serve as spoons ... Batavia and ice-lettuce head are also known. Other lettuces are cut, and cooked.
- Spinach: very popular in autumn harvest.
- Chards: very popular to sow in autumn, but especially the green chards rather than big white chards.
- Chicory: green leafy non-curled chicory is widespread and appreciated. Other varieties are known, such as the curled chicory, but endives or 'chicon de Verone' (red) seem unknown.
- Rocket, parsley, coriander, cress, purslane, mint, etc.: Salad herbs are very widespread and very much appreciated. They are often the basis of salads where there is not even lettuce. Orache and amaranth do not seem to be known in food use.
- Sage, marjoram, oregano, annual savoury, basil, verbena, chamomile, etc. They are all widely used.

- Onions: yellow, white, red, they are all popular and commonly cultivated. The onion is the basis of many Syrian dishes, prepared raw in salad or cooked. The young onion, Chinese onion or spring onion are also very popular.
- Garlic: White and purple garlic are very popular.
- Carrots: the long orange carrot is very popular, often grown in the plains in clay-rich soil.
- Beets: known but little used, and almost never prepared in salad.
- Turnips: the typical Milan turnips, red and white, are widespread. The other types of turnips are a priori almost unknown.
- Parsnips: a priori unknown.
- Radishes: only small classical radishes, or red balls are known and popular. Black, long or white radishes seem unrecognised.
- Beans, green and shelled: Very popular culture, dwarf and climbing, large flat seeds like borlotti, green beans and shelling are very convenient for cultivation in refugee camps and in town.
- Broad beans: extremely widespread. They are often eaten young and raw.
- Asparagus bean: a little known but appreciated plant, cultivated for fresh fruit as well as for seeds.
- Peas: widespread autumnal crops, especially for the green pea.
- Chickpeas: the flagship crop of mountains, used in the most famous national dishes. The chickpea is found in large or medium-sized seeds, but always beige.
- Corn: cornflour does not appear to be present in local dishes. In particular, sweet corn and, more recently, silage corn are grown. The latter no longer corresponds to the agrarian realities of the region.
- Green fertilisers : vetch, alfalfa and other plants used to make fertiliser are grown but rarely to cover the soil in winter. So far, we have not encountered any trace of clover.
- Any ornamental, edible or medicinal flowers are welcome as long as they are not highly invasive and could not pose a risk to local biodiversity.

The question of cereals (barley, wheat, rye) needs to be further explored.

It is important to give as much information as possible about the seed such as:

- Species name;
- Variety name;
- Year of harvest;
- Varietal purity;
- A photograph of the plant, its fruit;
- Earliness (early, mid-season or late varieties, if possible harvest time);

- If grown without irrigation;
- If there are cultivation or cooking tips that producers would like to share;
- The postcode of the place of production (and if they wish the contact mail of the producers so that they give news);
- Finally and specifically,
  - for tomatoes: determinate or indeterminate growth
  - for gourds: climbing or crawling type
  - for beans: green beans (we eat the fresh fruit) or dry (we eat the dry seed) and climbing or not.

The first 4 points of information are the most important.

It is very important to notify if seeds are from open pollinated (non-hybrid) varieties or that it are hybrid seeds. People would like to save their own seeds and for this reason prefer seeds from open pollinated varieties. Prevent disappointments! Hybrid seeds could be useful as well as long as it is known, so gardeners can decide whether they can harvest the seed again or not. Seeds from purchased vegetables (supermarket, etc.) are likely to have undergone natural hybridization.

If you have some useful seeds to donate (and you are in the Netherlands and), please contact [15thgarden-nl@aseed.net](mailto:15thgarden-nl@aseed.net) and we will see you we can collect the seeds and we will find a way to transport the seeds to Syria.