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Tulsa library planting seed collection at two branches

The pilot program will be available at two Tulsa branches.

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By NOUR HABIB World Staff Writer | 0 comments

Seeds will soon be in the catalog at the library.

Johanna Burton of the Tulsa City-County Library is launching a seed library at two branch locations this fall.

People look over varieties of seeds and tomato plants after a presentation on seed libraries during the monthly Sustainable Tulsa event at Foolish Things Coffee Co. in downtown Tulsa on Thursday. MICHAEL WYKE / Tulsa World

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Burton, a longtime gardener, started a small, grass-roots seed library last year that she called The Seed Commons.

"We were testing interest," Burton said. "It turns out a lot of people have been saving seeds."

The unofficial library has already gathered and checked out hundreds of packets of seeds.

When the "green team" at the Tulsa City-County Library heard of the grass-roots project, they "decided it would be an awesome thing for the library to have," Burton said.

And so, this fall, a seed library pilot program will launch at the Glenpool and Suburban Acres branches.

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The collection of seeds — including tomatoes, eggplant, basil and chives will be catalogued; then library goers will be able to check out seed packets. They can then plant them, enjoying most of the produce while drying a few seeds to return to the library.

"The point of this is creating access," Burton said.

Some people can't afford to buy seeds, she said. Others may just never consider it.

Having the seeds accessible at the library will provide encouragement for people to try growing their own food.

While speaking about the program at a Sustainable Tulsa event Thursday, Burton told attendees that seeds shared from someone's garden, rather than store-bought, are locally tested.

"When you save seeds at home, you can focus on what does well here," she said.

People save seeds from the plants that are best adapted to Tulsa's weather. These well-adapted seeds can withstand heat and drought, and in turn don't require too many chemicals or pesticides to thrive.

Burton said she hopes seed libraries can also make a difference in the lives of low-income families who often can't afford to buy pricey fruits and vegetables. She also hopes it will make these healthier food options available to those who live in "food deserts" — urban areas where the nearest regular grocery store is more than a mile away.

The two library branches where the seed library will launch are in areas with strong support for community gardens. The Glenpool branch has its own community garden.

Burton brought about 100 packets of seeds to the Sustainable Tulsa event and encouraged attendees to check some out and save the seeds. She also asked those who are already gardeners to consider sharing some of their seeds to help enlarge the collection.








Community libraries are a great place for this kind of program, Burton said, because librarians can help beginners research gardening methods or suggest books to help them get started.


Burton said she hopes the seed library will eventually also be "requestable," meaning people will be able to request that seeds be delivered to any branch for pickup. She also plans to categorize seeds based on difficulty, so that beginners can choose plants that are relatively easy to grow.

The seed library is still in the planning stages. Those who are interested in donating seeds can contact Burton at 918-549-7415 or jburton@tulsalibrary.org.

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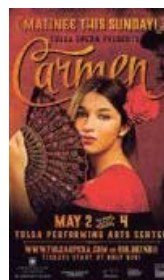
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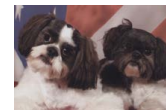
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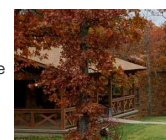
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