



Native Seeds SEARCH



Annual Report

2023



From the Director:

Dear Friend,

This past year, the conservation gardens have flourished and our collaboration with farmers has deepened, allowing us to effectively grow, regenerate and conserve seeds. With this growth and cooperation, we produced 91 different accessions, which marked a substantial increase from the previous year. This increase ensures the seeds we steward stay healthy and are shared generously.

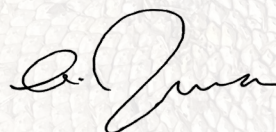
In our commitment to seed preservation, we enhanced our infrastructure with the addition of a high tunnel nursery and shade house, boosting our production and enabling us to donate plant starts to partnering organizations.

With grant funding, we expanded our support to communities that have historical and cultural ties to the seeds we steward.

We provided more than 19,000 free seed packets as well as conducted educational workshops and gave out small financial micro-grants to support community gardening and seed saving initiatives.

Your unwavering support has been pivotal. Because of you, these seeds are conserved, healthy, and increasingly shared within the Southwest and beyond. With your support, we will continue to protect these traditional, arid-adapted seeds for the tillers of today and the sowers of tomorrow.

With heartfelt gratitude,



Alexandra Zamecnik,
Executive Director



Our Mission

Native Seeds/SEARCH seeks to find, protect and preserve the seeds of the people of the Greater Southwest so that these arid adapted crops may benefit all peoples and nourish a changing world.

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Top & Bottom: Dia de San Juan Corn



Growing & Saving Seeds

Magdalena Big Cheese growing in the Conservation Gardens

In 2023, the impact of expanded growing spaces, along with the addition of more garden staff and volunteers, continued to yield positive outcomes. This year, we successfully harvested 91 varieties across our Conservation Center grow-out, Partner Farmers, and other collaborators—an increase from the 86 varieties harvested in the previous year.

57 seed varieties
grown for
regeneration

38 seed varieties
grown for
distribution

Total Seed Varieties
Harvested
91
(last year 86)



Seed Bank Stats

Thanks to our supporters, we achieved a significant milestone by reintroducing 31 seed varieties to our catalog. These varieties, that were absent for more than two years, are once again available, because of our expanded grow-outs and collaborative efforts.

Magdalena Big Cheese being processed in the Seed Lab

8 collection varieties made available for the first time:



S'oam Pawi - Chialwuli Tak (Native Access only)



Raramuri Multicolor Corn



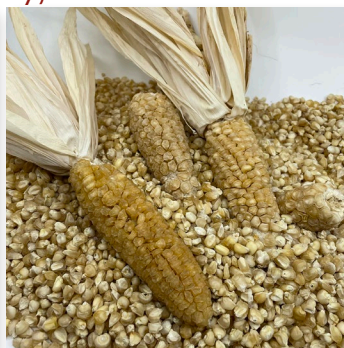
Colorado Red Bean



Border Chiltepin



San Luis Fava Bean



Desert White Sweet Corn



Chihuahuan Ornamental Amaranth



Desert Chia

Seed Sharing

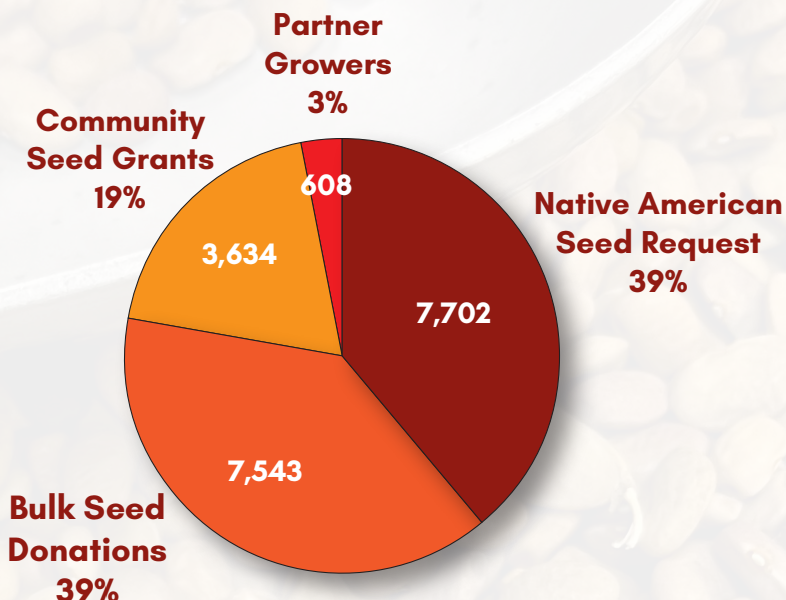
Seed Packet Donations

19,487

Bulk Seed Donations

62.9 lbs of seeds were donated to **63** organizations and/or events.

By comparison in 2022, 56.8 lbs were donated to 18 organizations.



Sunnyside High School

Community Seed Grant Recipient

"Our students celebrated our winter crops with a Carne Asada Taco Tuesday party. Our summer gardens gave way to enjoying the cucumbers and trying multiple recipes with our summer squash. Some took seeds home for their parents and to start container gardens, spreading sustainability into their communities."

- Melany Coates, Teacher at Sunnyside

Community Seed Grants

Of the **149** garden projects Community Seed Grants supported in 2023:

- 98 identify as Native American/Indigenous-led or serving
- 127 identify as Latinx, Hispanic and/or Spanish-speaking
- 92 are school gardens
- 57 are organizations, projects, collectives, and initiatives
- 17 are located on tribal lands
- 24 are recurring CSG recipients

Microgrants

Through funding from the USDA's Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production Grant Program, NS/S awarded 11 grants of \$2,000 each to community serving organizations in southern Arizona. These projects work to enhance food security, food sovereignty, seed saving, and knowledge-sharing in the region with preference given to Indigenous and Native-led community projects whose seeds are reflected in the NS/S seed collection.

Tully Elementary School

"Because we have many students who are Native American, Mexican American, or are from the Southwest, the students are able to recognize and connect with the seeds that Native Seed/SEARCH offers."

The school will use the microgrant to add four additional above-ground beds that allow for more veggies to be grown, and sent home with students to share with their families.

- Andrew Stocker, Teacher at Tully Elementary



Favor Celestial Community Economic Development/ Barrio Kroeger Lane Community Garden

Favor Celestial Community Economic Development Initiative is a grassroots nonprofit organization, cofounded by Barrio Kroeger Lane residents of Ingenious heritage, Tohono O'odham, Yaqui descendants and Mexican-American Elders. Favor Celestial has the mission to preserve the land below Sentinel Peak "A" Mountain - Tucson's Original Birthplace along the Santa Cruz River.

Partner Farmer Program

The Partner Farmer Program is at the core of our conservation goal of ensuring seeds are in the hands of Indigenous farmers who grow in or near the areas from where these seeds originate.

Valerie Nuvayestewa (Hopi/Tewa) partnered with NS/S to grow Hopi crops that had become harder to find, specifically Mawiwjwa (Hopi Purple String Bean), Hopi Black Bean, and Tawaktsi, Hopi Sweet Corn.

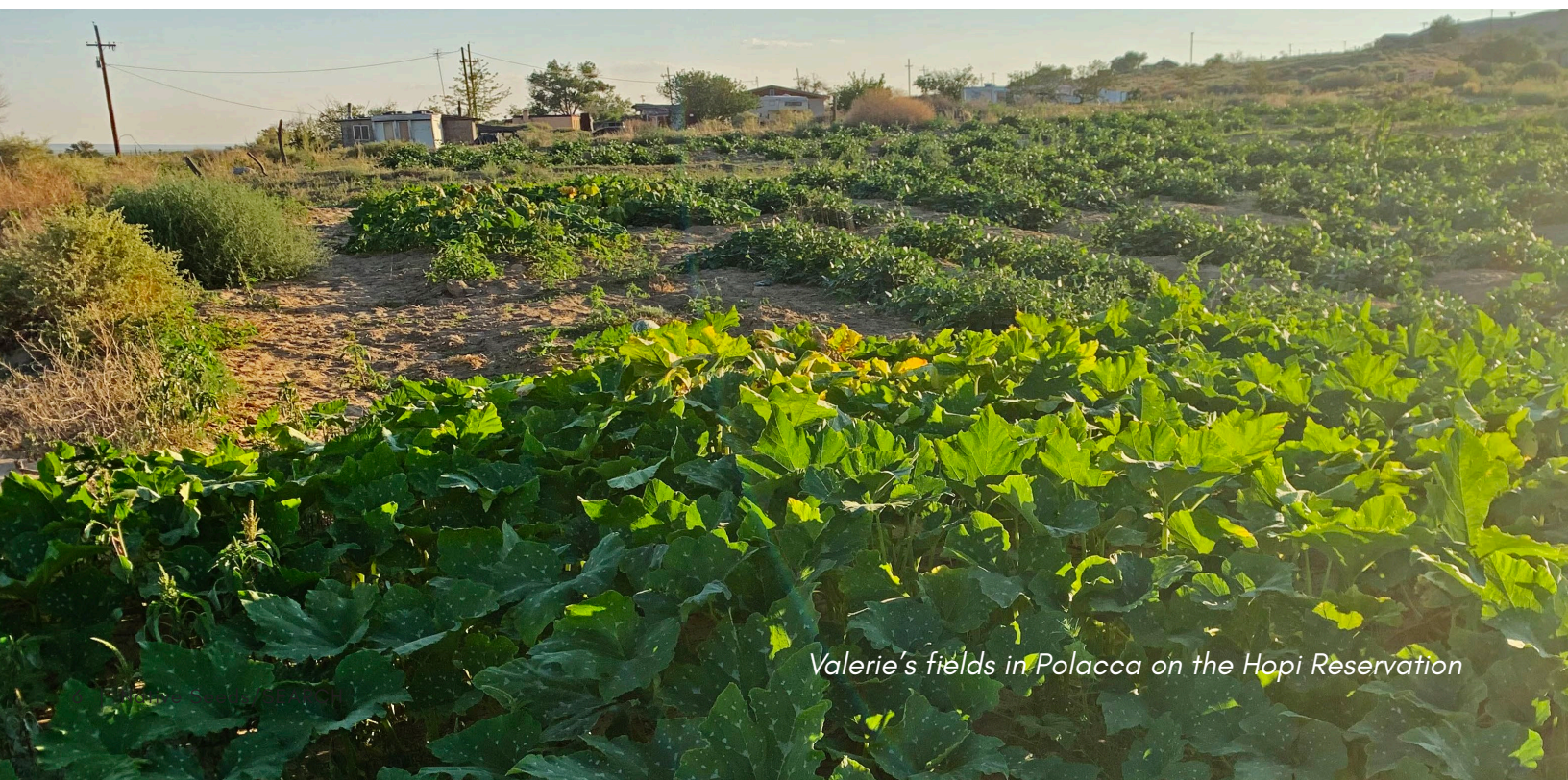
“I am a life long gardener, I have small beds and keep them in one enclosed area. In the past four years I have started helping with all areas of the bigger fields. I am now planting my own bean fields, which aren’t too big, behind my home and in front of our home. Our whole family helps to take care of our garden and fields.”

Farming is a family affair for Valerie, who is proud of her daughters’ passion to grow and work together. “Thank you for your help in returning some of Hopi seeds back home. I appreciate it very much. ”

Valerie is also the Project Coordinator for an environmental grassroots organization, Tuskwat Oqawtoynani (helping the Earth to gather its strength) and NS/S Board Member.



Valerie and her daughter joined last year’s Indigenous Women in Ag Gathering at the Conservation Center



Valerie’s fields in Polacca on the Hopi Reservation

Partner Farmers returned **42 seed varieties** in 2023

(last year: 32)

Farmers who returned seed:

Humberto Badillo (Akimel O'odham),
Gila River Indian Community, Chandler AZ

Samantha Gorney, Lowell Observatory,
Flagstaff AZ

Zach & Mary Ben (Diné) Bidii Baby Food LLC,
Shiprock NM

Deborah Hargrove, Greenhouse Trolley
Hobby Farm, Hereford AZ

Mike Benally (Diné) San Carlos AZ

Hannah Hendryk, Tohono Chul Park,
Tucson AZ

Patrick Bottiger, Kenyon College,
Mount Vernon OH

Colton Martin, Jack Wagonz Farm, Milford IL

Justin Casiquito (Jemez) Kee nu Sha Farm,
Albuquerque NM

Horton Nash, Paonia CO

Han Dañiels (Mimbres) Verdant Future Farm,
Velarde NM

Aaron Newton, Steward, Concord NC

Megan Davey, Outlier Farm, Mancos CO

Mike Reeske, Rio Del Rey Beans,
Valley Center CA

Anthony Deluze, Hoaipono at Ka'onohi Farm,
Kalaauo, Oahu HI

Amy Scanes-Wolf, Dryland Agroecology
Research, Longmont CO

Carol Fritzinger, Colton Community Garden,
Flagstaff AZ

Anita Thompson, UA Cooperative Extension,
Taylor AZ

Grant Tims, Rejuvenation Farm, Red Rock AZ



Tucson Gardener Program

To kick off 2023 we welcomed Partner Gardener participants to the Conservation Center to process seeds from the Mayo Blusher Squash they grew-out in 2022. These gardeners were given the seeds in June, and grew them in their home gardens across Arizona (we grew them at the Conservation Center too). Gardeners returned a total of 15 lbs of squash seed!



Garden Expansion

The goal for the Conservation Center gardens this year was to prepare for future expansion by further developing our nursery, completing improvements to the irrigation systems, training more staff and apprentices in seed production, and building the systems and processes needed to increase our growing space over the next several years.

Nursery

We completed the high tunnel nursery, equipped with sturdy concrete greenhouse tables (more robust and cost-effective than nursery benches and retain winter heat). A misting system was added for seed starting and spot-spitter irrigation for large potted plants, just in time for winter growing. We also constructed a shadehouse, doubling nursery space for busier summer months. The shadehouse offers a cool area for tree propagation and seed starting, attracting bees and other pollinators.

The NS/S nursery enabled us to grow veggies, flowers and trees and donate over 700 of these starts to partner organizations. We also sold over \$10,000 of these starts to support conservation efforts.





Spiral Basin project

Rainwater Harvesting

With the help of volunteers, we built the final and largest section of the four infiltration basins that will capture rainwater runoff from the east parking lot and deliver it to trees and crops. The spiral shape of the 45-foot diameter structure was inspired by NS/S Board Chair Jacob Butler's spiral planting basins in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Garden. Quitobaquito pomegranate, Desert Willow, and Desert Ironwood trees have been planted around the basin and additional native plants will be added this fall once we see how the basin functions during monsoon season.

The earthworks and floodwater-fed basins capture rainwater, plant material, and crop residues, boosting Soil Organic Matter (SOM) levels. In our seed production fields, SOM has reached up to 5.7%, increasing soil water holding capacity by 20,000 gallons per acre for every 1% increase in SOM. (NRDC.org) By maintaining these practices alongside cover cropping, minimal or no-till methods, and mulching, raising SOM across our farm could store up to 100,000 gallons of rainwater per acre.



AmeriCorps members & volunteers harvest l'itoi onions

Outreach & Education



Collaborations with the Traditional Native American Farmers Association (TNAFA) and Director Clayton Brascoupe, have grown relationships regionally and internationally. In January 2023, Dr. Andrea Carter was invited to participate in the TNAFA Pueblo to Pueblo Initiative to provide seed saving training to Indigenous rural farmers and agriculture students in Belize.

10 workshops for Indigenous/Native farmers, garden program leaders, and community members on seed saving, seed banking, traditional foods, and gardening.

12 tours and meetings at the Conservation Center with community partners, school groups, seed recipients, farmers, and organization leaders.

24 visits to farms and community gardens to provide site consultation, programmatic support, and discuss collaboration.

13 visits to schools and youth organizations to support educators and to lead seed and garden activities with youth.

9 tabling events to represent NS/S with garden resources, flyers, free seed packets, and hands-on games and seed activities.

8 presentations at conferences, community centers, and events on NS/S seed programs, seed saving, and food growing.

3 conferences attended centering Indigenous/Native agriculture, nutrition, and knowledge.



Indigenous Garden Leaders of Southern AZ workshop hosted with Community Food Bank of AZ



Pasqua Yaqui seniors receive Mayo/Yoeme Basil seedpackets, and Chiapas Wild tomato plant starts from the Conservation Center's greenhouse.



Participants of the Indigenous Women in Ag Conference pose with seed cleaning screens they made at the Conservation Center.

Volunteers



Conservation Gardens

186 volunteers = 2,849 hours

"It is truly amazing to be able to come to this property in the middle of Tucson and farm! We consider ourselves very fortunate to be a small part in helping this amazing organization that does so much for our community by preserving and propagating the legacy of southwestern arid adapted seeds."

-Millie Lierman, pictured center, constructing the spiral basin with her husband Keith, left

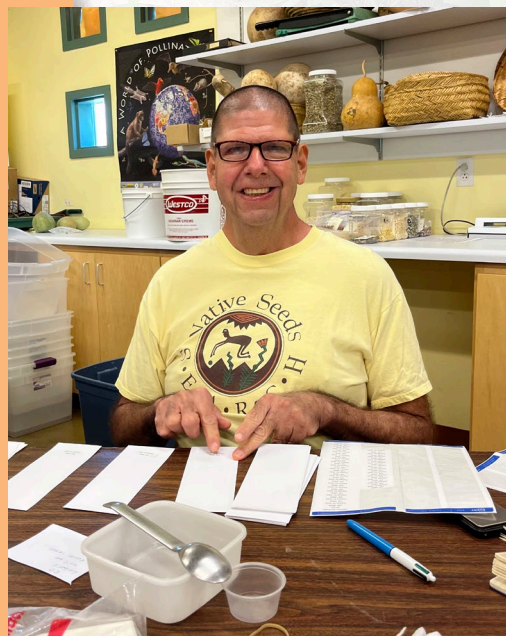
Seed Lab

28 volunteers = 2,864 hours

We are deeply grateful to have our remarkable volunteer, Sam, with us in our 40th year. Sam has been a volunteer with NS/S for 23 years!

"I like volunteering at NS/S because it gives me a sense of pride. It's always a challenge to pack 200 or more packets of seeds in a day." - Sam Michael, pictured right

This year, Sam packed 10,369 seed packets!



Total of 5,713 volunteer hours = **\$172,132** value of labor
(based on 2023 AZ value of volunteer time)

Board of Directors

Jacob Butler, Chair
Onk Akimel O'odham

Tudor Montague, Vice Chair
Quechan

John McLean, Secretary

Linda Peck, Treasurer

Doug Smith

Valerie Nuvayestewa
Hopi/Tewa

Cherilyn Yazzie
Diné

Brandon Merchant

Karen Reichhardt, co-founder

Anthony Francisco Jr.
Tohono O'odham Nation

Staff

Alexandra Zamecnik
Executive Director

Lissa Marinaro
Marketing & Development Director

Glenn Wagner
Finance & Operations Manager

Dr. Andrea Carter
AG Outreach & Education Manager

Sheryl Joy
Seed Bank Manager

Allison Mills
E-Commerce Manager

Joel Johnson
Conservation Garden Farmer

Dick Gase
Seed Distribution Specialist

Claire Meuschke
Community Seed Programs Coordinator

Laura Jones
Development Coordinator

Justin Risley
Communications Coordinator

Betsy Armstrong
Fulfilment Coordinator

Linda Stewart
Distribution & Operations Associate

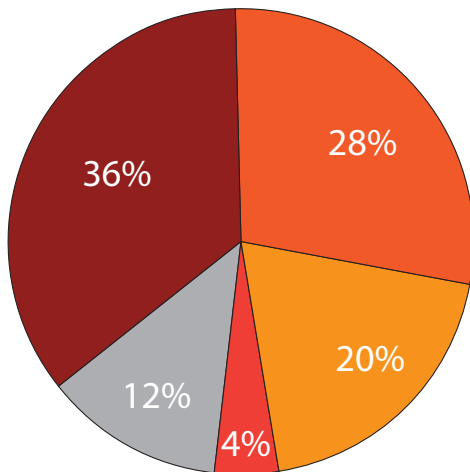
Helena Gonzales
Seed Conservation Associate

Monica Sanders
Conservation Garden Associate

Callen Aster
Conservation & Distribution Associate

Financials

Financials for the period of October 1, 2022- September 30, 2023.
Detailed financial information is available upon request.

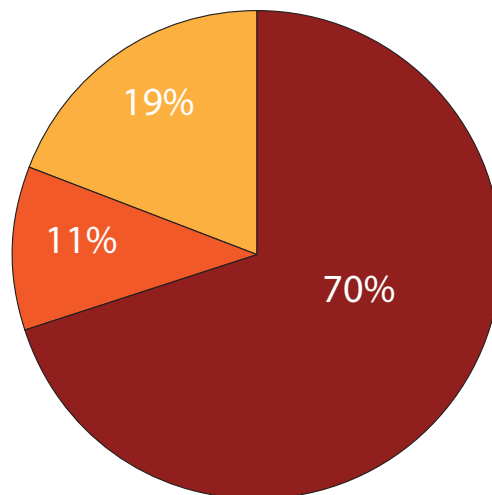


Revenue

Retail (net)	\$575,478
Donations	\$459,500
Foundations/ Grants	\$315,324
Membership	\$70,311
Other Income	\$200,050
Total	\$1,620,663

Expenses

Programming	\$1,113,288
Administration	\$177,034
Development	\$293,908
Total	\$1,584,230



Net Income: \$36,433



Native Seeds/SEARCH

Celebrating 40 years of seed conservation

nativeseeds.org