



OSSI Group to Rally: Pledging to Keep Seed Free!

Unkn
Field

- What:** OSSI Free Seed Rally and Pledge
Why: Solidarity with the International Day of Struggle in Defense of Peasants' and Farmers' Seeds
When: 11:00-11:45am, Thursday, April 17
Where: Corner of Linden Drive and Babcock Drive, UW-Madison Campus
Who: Prof. Irwin Goldman (UW Horticulture), Prof. Jack Kloppenburg (UW Community and Environmental Sociology), Claire Luby (UW Horticulture), Jahi Chappell (Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy), Tom Stearns (High Mowing Organic Seeds)

On the campus of the University of Wisconsin this Thursday, April 17, members of the Open Source Seed Initiative (OSSI) will rally to share seed with each other and with the community. They will then lead a pledge to keep that seed freely available to anyone who wants to use it.

The plant breeders, seed companies, and sustainability advocates who are part of OSSI chose April 17, designated as the International Day of Struggles in Defense of Peasants' and Farmers' Seeds, to take action in response to the increased patenting of seeds worldwide.

Today, only three companies (Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta) account for about half of all commercial seed sales. Increasingly, patenting is used to enhance the power and control of these and similar companies over the seeds that feed the world.

Inspired by the free and open source software movement that has provided alternatives to proprietary software, OSSI was created to free the seed - that is, to make sure that the genes in at least some seed can never be locked away from use by intellectual property rights.

To that end, OSSI developed an Open Source Seed Pledge that commits anyone receiving OSSI seed to keep that seed - and any derivatives bred from that seed - freely available for use by others. Explains OSSI member and Wild Garden Seed breeder Frank Morton, "That's free as in speech, free as in liberated, not free as in beer!"

At the event in front of the Microbial Sciences building on the UW-Madison campus, OSSI speakers will explain why they are pledging to freely share the seeds they have developed. OSSI seed will be distributed to the crowd, and people will be asked to read aloud the Open Source Seed Pledge that is printed on every OSSI seed packet.

Among the 37 varieties of 14 species being shared on Thursday are such cultivars as Wrinkled Crinkled Crumpled cress from Frank Morton of Wild Garden Seed in Oregon, Full Pint malting barley from Pat Hayes of Oregon State University, Midnight Lightning zucchini from Vermont's High Mowing Organic Seeds, and Sovereign carrots from UW's own Irwin Goldman. Most of

the OSSI varieties are available as organic seed and were bred with organic growers and gardeners in mind.

Sets of OSSI s free seeds will subsequently be mailed to prominent decision-makers and influential individuals such as First Lady Michelle Obama, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, and author Michael Pollan. OSSI is spreading the word that what the world needs is more free and open source seeds, not more patented and indentured seeds!

Says Tom Stearns, president of High Mowing, “We are proud to offer these seeds to the farmers and breeders of the world in order to spread diversity and ensure a stable, sustainable local source of food for farmers and gardeners. These seed varieties and new strains arising from them can never be owned by anyone but the public and that is important to us as a commercial seed company with a social mission at its core.”

When seeds are patented, they cannot be saved or replanted or shared by farmers and gardeners. And because there may be no research exemption for patented material, plant breeders at universities and small seed companies may not be able to use patented seed to create the new crop varieties that should be sustainable alternatives to the genetically narrow, conventional cultivars of the big transnationals.

According to Irwin Goldman, Professor of Horticulture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a founding member of OSSI, “In order to respond effectively to the challenges of improving our crops to feed our rapidly growing population, farmers and plant breeders will need access to genetic resources. That access is becoming increasingly limited by controls associated with seed licensing. We would like to create a new conduit for seeds that would allow for a pool of genetic resources that are freely available for all to use, share, save, replant, and breed.”

OSSI members hope to initiate a movement for free sharing of seed across the country and around the world. Adds Stearns, “OSSI is itself a seed that we have planted, and it will be really interesting to see where it goes, what conversations it starts and what new relationships it creates.”

As a follow up to the April 17 rally, OSSI plans to hold an Open Source Seed Teach-In at 7:00pm on Tuesday, May 6, on the UW campus.

For more information on the Open Source Seed Initiative go to www.opensourceseedinitiative.org, or visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/opensourceseedinitiative or contact Irwin Goldman (ilgoldma@wisc.edu) Jack Kloppenburg (jrkloppe@wisc.edu)

This Open Source Seed Pledge is printed on every OSSI seed packet:

“This Open Source Seed Pledge is intended to ensure your freedom to use the seed contained herein in any way you choose, and to make sure those freedoms are enjoyed by all subsequent users. By opening this packet, you pledge that you will not restrict others' use of these seeds and their derivatives by patents, licenses, or any other means. You pledge that if you transfer these seeds or their derivatives you will acknowledge the source of these seeds and accompany your transfer with this pledge.”

Contributors and Names of Varieties to be Shared at the OSSI Rally:

Kevin Murphy (Washington State University)

Elwah spelt

White Salmon spelt

Pat Hayes (Oregon State University)

Full Pint barley

High Mowing Organic Seeds (Wolcott, VT)

Midnight Lightning zucchini

Irwin Goldman (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Sovereign carrot

Oranje carrot

Jonathan Spero (Lupine Knoll Farm, Williams, OR)

Solstice broccoli

Siber-Frill kale

Emerald Fan lettuce

Frank Morton (Wild Garden Seed, Philomath, OR)

Flashback Mix calendula

Orange Sherbet calendula

Lemon Pastel

Redventure celery

Wrinkled Crinkled Crumpled cress

Red Ursa kale

White Russian kale

Wild Garden Mix kale

Mizspoon mustard

Pink Lettuce mustard

Purple Rapa mustard

Dragon's Tongue mustard

Magma mustard

Gatherer's Gold Italian pepper

Stocky Red Roaster pepper

Little Bells pepper

Brightest Brilliant quinoa

Cherry Vanilla quinoa

Red Head quinoa

Delicata Zeppelin squash