

How traditional seeds and foods are improving health

Seeds and foods that are rooted in ancient traditions and practices can be a major contributor to people's physical, mental and spiritual health.

The power of seed to support people



In March 2024, under the name 'Growing to Seed', 14 people in the North East of England committed to a six-month learning programme about agroecological seed production – the history and politics of seed, techniques for good quality production, and the practices of low input growing. The outcomes provide early-stage evidence of the direct link between seed production and wellbeing. This region of the UK is often associated with poor physical and mental health, linked to low income, limited levels of educational attainment and a damaged post-industrial landscape. At the close of the training, learners said they were feeling better as a result of working with seed. The notion of abundance they experienced, and the resulting capacity to share seed freely, were key factors in this change, which for them was distinct from the experience of growing food. ■

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TV cooking show strengthens Pacific Islanders' health and food cultures



Over the course of a generation, there has been a fundamental shift in the way people in the Pacific Islands eat and grow their food. The toll on health, biodiversity and food cultures has been disastrous. Since 2019, a reality TV cooking show called [Pacific Island Food Revolution](#) has succeeded in attracting

audiences and drawing attention to these challenges in an innovative, creative and unshaming way. Contestants from the islands of Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu compete against each other to cook up recipes based on fresh local ingredients. The show is currently screened in 12 island countries and has more than 5 million weekly viewers. We have found it terrifically affirming to realise that your culture is your cure. ■

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Learning from Indigenous agricultural traditions at a university farm



For three seasons, as students and faculty, we have been cultivating an Indigenous agroecological garden – the Four Sisters Garden – at the University of Montana's [PEAS Farm](#) in the US in collaboration with [Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College](#) (NHSC), the tribal college of the Mandan,

Hidatsa and Arikara (MHA) Nation on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. The garden is a 250-square-foot space with corn, beans, squash and sunflowers planted in mounds. In the garden, we follow the agricultural traditions and cultural protocol of the Indigenous MHA peoples. Through this protocol, we are asked to practice the worldview and cultures associated with the Tribes' ancestral garden, entering the garden as our full physical, intellectual and spiritual selves. In practice, this requires us to recognise that plants and other land-based beings have spirit and sentience. Thus, when we enter the garden, we are mindful of our language and behavior; as we work, we are respectful, kind, and of positive mind. ■

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