

# Budding new programs

## Copper Queen Library to open seed bank, gardening club

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Copper Queen Library Assistant Program Coordinator Alison Williams and Library Manager Jason Macoviak sort through seeds Tuesday in the Bisbee facility. The two, along with Library Assistant Kathy Parke, have collaborated to start a seed program funded by grants.

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BISBEE — The Copper Queen Library is working toward sprouting a whole new program this spring.

Kathy Parke, library assistant at Copper Queen, spearheaded a campaign to get a seed library and gardening club off the ground. As an avid gardener, Parke wanted to find a way to make her craft more accessible to Bisbee residents.

“I’ve always had a passion for gardening since the 1970s and I think that every community should have a seed library, not only for food security, but also for seed diversity,” Parke said. “We are excited to offer this to the community.”

Though the seed library is still budding, she said, Copper Queen has already started collecting packets of seeds for its soon-to-be community seed surplus. The library received a grant of 30 packets of seed from Native Seeds/SEARCH, a seed conservation group based in Tucson and multiple seed donations from local gardeners as well as a box of diverse seeds from Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, a Missouri-based seed company that specializes in heirloom seed lines.

The goal for the new seed library is to create a community of sustainable gardeners and develop local lines of crops, Parke said.

Once the seed library opens, patrons can check out any seeds of their choosing — much like a library book — and take them home. Parke said the process will, hopefully, help produce generations of resilient seed varieties that have adapted to southern Arizona’s arid environment.

“The goal, ultimately, is for the patron to bring back the seed that they grow — let it go to seed and bring it back,” she said.

Alison Williams, assistant program coordinator for Copper Queen, said the library will only feature organic and non-genetically-modified seeds. Williams hopes the new seed library will help beginner and master gardeners alike be more health- and environmentally-conscious.

Talk of a possible seed library started last year, but staff didn’t start the planning process until five months ago, she explained. Together with Jason Macoviak, library manager at Copper Queen, Williams worked with the Bisbee Bloomers, a local gardening group, to learn more about gardening. Williams said she and Macoviak were planning to model the seed library after established seed banks in cities across the country.

But, after looking at the library in Portal, Arizona, she said a small-scale seed bank is perfect for Bisbee.

“When we saw that Portal was successfully doing this, we realized that we didn’t need to do a big expansion,” Williams said, adding that patrons will be able to check out a variety of seeds from a shelved collection at Copper Queen. “It’s a great opportunity to offer another aspect of what libraries can do for the community.”

In conjunction with the seed library, Copper Queen will also launch a monthly gardening club in March. The club will meet on the second Tuesday of every month and feature speakers from experts in plants and soil.

The goal for the program is to educate the community about gardening initiatives and promote sustainable practices.

“The idea is that you adapt seeds to this climate,” Williams said. “By using heirloom seeds in our library, we then will promote and proliferate more heirloom plants that will continue to grow. We are being very considerate about the seeds that are growing in our library.”



The Copper Queen Library will be starting a seed program where patrons can acquire seeds and plant them in their garden.

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