



Each subplot is a patchwork of wheat, barley, emmer and einkorn to prevent accidental crossing by physical contact. When the seeds were planted, various pathways were left to become lanes of squash.

They Sell Rare Staple Seeds Direct

Great Lakes Staple Seeds makes it easy to grow staple crops in the Upper Midwest. Some are heritage varieties, others are landraces, and some are newer, like a triticale developed in the 1990's. All are open-pollinated and non-GMO and only available online.

"We lived in China for 8 years, and friends there shared the government's suggestion that people have enough food for 5 years," says Scott Hucker, Great Lakes Staple Seeds. "We started calculating what we would need to feed a family for a year."

When they returned to the U.S., Scott and

Eleanor started to add grains to the gardening they had done before their time in China. One of the sources they found for grains was John Sherck, Sherck Seeds. He was planning to retire and encouraged them to begin selling staple seeds.

"We had been buying seed from John and growing staple crops for ourselves for several years," recalls Eleanor. "We decided to give it a try. If it didn't take off, we would still have the seeds for ourselves."

"Within 2 weeks, we incorporated and began trialing seeds," says Scott. "We grew out 40 varieties of wheat and barley in 3

by 4-ft. plots and harvested half a cup of each. We had a few kinds of wheat we were planting in 30 by 30-ft. plots, exploring how much space we needed to feed our family for a year."

They were up and running with a website and selling seed, just in time for the pandemic to hit. "Orders came in so fast in 2020 that we had to shut down to catch up," says Scott.

Scott has a full-time, off-farm job as an engineer in the auto industry. Eleanor handles the bulk of order fulfillment, website maintenance and inventory control. They share the planting, weeding, harvest and processing, all by hand.

That's a lot of labor. They have 225 grains and cereals posted on their website. Only a portion of them are planted each year.

It's the varieties that make the seeds they offer so interesting, from Gaspé Flint Corn that tassels within 30 days and matures in 70 or less to Rox Orange Syrup Cane Sorghum. They offer five varieties of millet and 10 of triticale. They offer 120 legumes, including a bush bean brought from Norway in the 1870's.

They also offer a few functional crops like flax for fiber and food, as well as sesame for flavoring and oil and even tobacco for use as a natural pesticide. Other utility crops offered may be used for weaving, broom making, cordage and even thatching. While the okra they offer might be considered out of place in a staples inventory, the seeds can be pressed for an oil that is edible and suitable as a biofuel. The stems can be used to make

cordage or rough cloth, and the leaves can be eaten as greens.

The prices vary from \$3.00 to \$6.50 depending on weight or seed count.

While they don't limit sales, they do encourage customers to limit the amount they buy. The concept is for buyers to grow out the seeds they buy and select seeds from those they harvest for future planting. The idea is that over several years of planting and selection, the variety will adapt to local soils and weather.

"The best seeds for your garden come from your garden," suggest the Huckers in their blog. They are enthusiastic advocates of seed saving by their customers. This doesn't seem to be hurting their sales any. "We have about 10 acres in total, broken up into three gardens," explains Scott. "We can only grow one kind of rye each year because it is wind-pollinated. Wheat and barley plots must be separated. Our gardens are a patchwork quilt with hundreds of plots."

Seeds are usually wrapped up by mid-April to begin spring grain production. Great Lakes Staple Seeds offers education in seeds needed for true self-sufficiency. The website is also filled with information on how to grow and use staple crops.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Great Lakes Staple Seeds (seeds@greatlakesstapleseeds.com; www.greatlakesstapleseeds.com; www.facebook.com/greatlakesstapleseeds).

Local Seed Group Sells Across Canada

Superior Seed Producers (SSP) started as a source for locally saved seeds, but now sells seeds nationwide.

"Most of our sales are still local, but we've sold seed from the Maritimes to British Columbia," says Evalisa McIlffaterick, Superior Seed Producers member. They were helped by the Bauta Family Initiative For Canadian Seed Security. "Our first-year seed sales were around \$1,000. In 2020 it was more than \$20,000."

The half dozen members of the co-op save seeds from more than 50 plant varieties grown in their own gardens. Some of them have been saving particular seeds for as many as 50 years, while others like McIlffaterick are newer. The group meets monthly, but the April meeting is when they discuss who is saving what for the coming year.

"We try to make sure we aren't saving too many of the same thing," says McIlffaterick. She operates Root Cellar Gardens, a local CSA.

"I grow around 40 different varieties of plants, including four or five flowers," says McIlffaterick. "I grow on a bigger scale than most of the members, so I try to fill in the gap on more popular seeds like carrots and beans."

In addition to her own favorites, McIlffaterick finds herself a caretaker of another's saved seed. "I inherited a zucchini grown by another member for more than 40 years," she says.

McIlffaterick goes beyond saving seeds to breeding and adapting seeds to northwest Ontario's short seasons, wet springs, and early frosts. She is currently at work on a watermelon, as well as trying new varieties. SSP Seed packets are priced at \$4 each.



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Seed producers receive \$2 for each packet of their seed sold. The remainder goes to Roots to Harvest, a local non-profit.

"Roots to Harvest manages our financials, packaging and distribution," explains McIlffaterick. "They produce some seed, work with community members in their gardens and employ young people year-round."

Seeds can be purchased online or through Roots to Harvest. They are also listed on Seeds of Diversity's website listing of small Canadian seed companies.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Roots to Harvest, 450 Fort William Rd., Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada P7B 2Z6 (ph 807-285-0189; superiorseedproducers@gmail.com; www.superiorseedproducers.wordpress.com; www.r2hshop.ca; www.seeds.ca).

Family Grows, Markets "Lentil Crunchers"

The savory snack, Lentil Crunchers, is Farver Farms' latest product to make it easier for consumers to add healthy legumes to their diets.

"To my knowledge, we are the only ones who grow the lentils, have them cleaned and processed, and then bring them back to the farm to season and package them as snacks," says Shauna Farver.

While her husband and his family grow crops on the 3,000-acre Montana family farm, she operates the value-added portion of Farver Farms. Using lentils they raise, she started selling mixes in 2016, ranging from chili and chicken salad mixes to desserts such as brownies and lemon bars. After meeting the owners of Big Sandy Organics, makers of Kracklin' Kamut, a snack made with the ancient wheat grain, Farver was inspired to create a lentil snack.

"They ran our lentils through their process, and it turned out better than we could imagine," she says. The proprietary process includes frying lentils in safflower oil.

After they're processed, the lentils return to Farver Farms to add seasoning and package them for shipping. Lentil Crunchers come in four popular flavors: Signature Salty, Sweet Hickory, Dill Pickle and Chipotle Ranch. They can be added to salads and other dishes or eaten plain.

"Little kids love them because they're tiny, and they're a mom-approved snack. They fit in with the gluten-free crowd and have lots of protein for vegetarians. It's just a better-for-you option than other snacks," she explains. Besides being able to provide a few jobs



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in their community, the snacks and mixes meet the farm's field-to-table goal.

Farver Farms' Lentil Crunchers and mixes are available at area retail stores and online through the website, starting at \$3.50 for 2-oz sampler packs to 25 oz. packages for \$25. Farver Farms is offering FARM SHOW readers a 15 percent discount for Lentil Crunchers and Lentil Mixes by using the code: FARM SHOW.

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