

KVANN (Norwegian Seed Savers)



VOSSAKVANN

Bruksgenbanker og matplantemangfold
Erfaringer fra europeiske pionerer

Fridtjof Nansen Institutt
31st October 2019

Stephen Barstow, E.S.M., E.O.M., S.O.O.F





KVANNN

Norwegian Seed Savers

Kunnskap og Vern av Nytteplanter i Norge
(Knowledge and Protection of Useful Plants in Norway)

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Lawrence D Hills
and the
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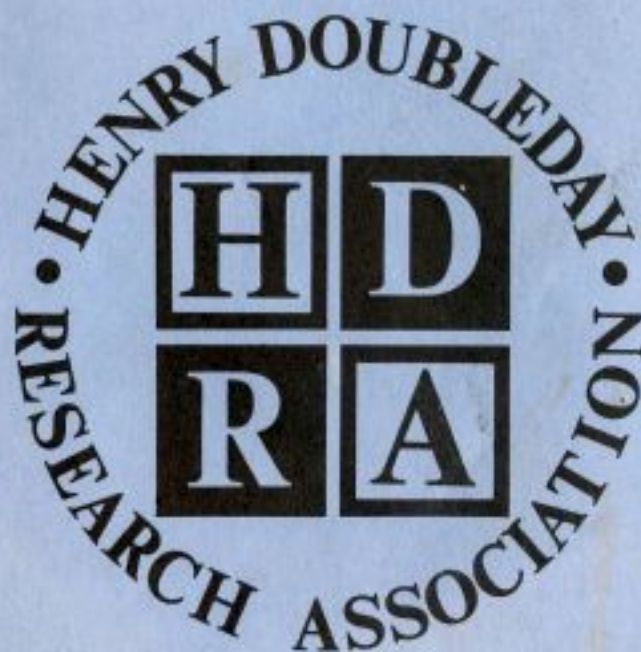
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SPRING 1980

THE WORLD'S VANISHING VEGETABLES

We have already reported, in earlier newsletters, on the threat to vegetable seeds in North America. Now we hear that legislation on Plant Breeders Rights is proposed for Australia, who will also get a National List, just as we have here in the U.K. and in Europe. All our groups run seed libraries, because there is only one large seedsman in Australia, Messrs. Yates and it is extremely hard to obtain ordinary seeds like sprouting broccoli and a number of herbs. So far there are no fines to enforce prohibitions of sales.

The term "Plant Breeders Rights Legislation" is an euphemism, because most plant breeders work for multi-national companies. Today, according to "The Vanishing Seeds" a United Nations Environment Programme feature sent round the world's press, the largest seed firm in the world is not Suttons, Vilmorin of France, or Burpee of America, but Royal Dutch Shell, because the mighty oil company has taken over so many craftsman firms. All the big companies are investing in seeds because of the protection that new laws bring and the patent possibilities.

The article quotes the new American tomato Florida MH-1 as an example. It can be ripened only by a spray that will get it ready to suit the market needs, and the seed firm is a subsidiary of the firm that makes the spray. When this one gets off the ground it could easily drive every other variety off the market, even the four which dominate the British glasshouse industry, all yielding over 100 tons an acre.

The commercially successful is the enemy of choice and of the genetic diversity that makes it possible to breed for resistance to the changing diseases and conditions of the future, and to retain flavour and nutritional value in what we eat.

This is not to say that F.1 hybrids are necessarily bad - though they are the favourites of modern seedsmen because the customer cannot save his own seed - or that plant breeders should not enjoy patent rights and royalties on their products which cost ever more to raise, just as all inventors and authors deserve royalties. What must be fought are the regulations that give them rights no other patent holder enjoys.

Japanese television sets, adding machines and electronics of all kinds are beautifully designed and covered by patents, but you can still buy British even if the ideas are ten years out of date. No "invention" other than a vegetable seed variety is protected by law from the competition of the past - you can patent a non-stick frying pan, but there is no fine for selling honest stainless steel to those who want it. Suppose by some electrical disaster, like changing the Earth's magnetic field, that all the world's transistor radios went out of action, we could still make crystal sets, but if they were vegetables this would be illegal. The analogy is not exact, however, for plants are not crystals. Once the seeds are lost, they are gone for ever.

There seems to be only one immediate, easy, simple and cheap way round the problem. That is to treat vegetable varieties as though they

were books or music or indeed any other patented products. Have them run out of copyright or be patent expired. I suggest that all vegetable varieties that have been on the market more than 25 years should be placed outside the E.E.C. Regulations, to be bought and sold without any restriction whatsoever.

Flowering plants and ornaments of all kinds, fruit trees and all species including herbs and such rarities as skirret are outside the regulations. Indeed, the Ministry takes very considerable trouble to preserve our heritage of fruit varieties. There is even a National Collection of rhubarb, but tomatoes are vegetables and after June 30th when 500 more of our vegetable varieties get the chop, there will be a fine of £400 for selling or cataloguing Davington Epicure, Histon Ideal, and also Market King, which I grew 50 years ago, thin skinned, delicious and with a bloom like a freshly caught trout.

The Threat in Europe.

When the Plant Varieties and Seeds Act of 1964, as amended by the European Communities Act of 1972, came into being, the National Lists of Varieties were compiled with the co-operation of the seedsmen. This left unlisted and illegal all the varieties in the HDRA Vegetable Seed Library and many more we have yet to rescue. Now we have Spain, Portugal and Greece lined up to enter the E.E.C. and Turkey just on the brink. When the seedsmen of these countries have helped their equivalent to the Department of the Ministry that looks after our regulations to compile the list, there may be as many as 50% of the local varieties which have been grown by peasants for centuries and sold in the local markets for cash without the issue of any catalogues at all. Or consider even a Greek seedsman in a village, who, like his father and grandfather before him, buys seeds from local peasants and sells them to customers from other villages. He pushes any forms that come, into his waste paper basket, never having taken much notice of Athens, and then finds out that half his catalogue is illegal.

To bring the varieties on to the National List he would have to send them for two years trial to the Greek equivalent of Cambridge, at his own expense (about £600 is a British estimate) and then pay a registration fee of £70 a year and an annual inspection fee for the Ministry to satisfy itself that the seeds are distinct, true to name and stable. The peasants would not do it, and he cannot afford to spend the money for even 10% of the varieties in his catalogue, so he simply gives up and buys his seeds wholesale from the multi-nationals. Because he has to make a living he will push the new varieties and because the locals trust him they buy far more freely than they would from any foreign company.

Cuba has lost 90% of this year's tobacco crop from a fungus disease (Sunday Times 6/4/80) because they have imported new, higher yielding Bulgarian varieties from the U.S.S.R. and replaced the kinds that had built the reputation of Havana cigars. It is not enough just to preserve a range of varieties in cold storage as in the Gene Bank at Wellesbourne. We need to have them growing as crops each year in the open so that

ABOUT KVANN

- *Established by the Norwegian Genetic Resource Centre and a national gardening club as a series of so-called Plant Clubs in 2005:*
Vegetables, potatoes and herbs
Berries
Ornamentals
House Plants
- *KVANN was founded as a membership organisation in April 2017 with some annual funding from the Norwegian Agriculture Agency*
- *We work to conserve old varieties of Norwegian seed and vegetatively propagated vegetables, herbs, fruit, berries and ornamentals*
- *We work towards more diversity in our food, testing out new species that may be adapted to the Norwegian climate with a lot of focus on perennial plants*
- *We publish a yearbook in February and an autumn catalogue focused on seed and vegetatively propagated perennials : About 700 vegetable / herb varieties, about 250 of which are Norwegian heirlooms*
- *We arrange seed saving and other courses across the country...such as grafting, forest gardening etc.*
- *Annual membership of kr 250 (about \$30) and we will reach 500 members this year*
- *We are working to establishing a network of Vegetable Sanctuaries across the country*

KVANN's POTATO PROJECT

in collaboration with the Norwegian Genetic Resource Centre

*10 virus cleaned varieties available each year from our national collection
of about 120 varieties*





F. C. Schübeler

Schübeler's Network

*We are inspired by botanist
and leader of the botanical
garden in Oslo:*

**Frederik Christian
Schübeler (1815 –1892)**
was a Norwegian botanist.

KVANN's vegetable sanctuary network:

**Like Schübeler, we are looking to use the
old rectory gardens!**

*We have access to national clone collections through
our relationship to the Norwegian Genetic Resource Centre*

Horseradish

Jerusalem Artichokes

Rhubarb

Shallot

Fruit

Berries

Fruit trees

Ornamentals

To assure the quality of our work, KVANN is organised through
PLANTELAUG and *TEMALAUG*

SANSAI LAUG

We could grow much more food in the Arctic and Mountains using perennials
Sansai: Mountain vegetables in Japanese

HVITLØKSLAUG:
40 varieties planted last week in
Valdres



ALLIUM-LAUG members can order onions
from our national onion collection in Trondheim

Rematriating Scandinavian Vegetables

The Rare 'Norwegian Pencil' Bean Finds Its Way Home

May 18, 2018 Sara Friedl-Putnam



The beautiful 'Norwegian Pencil' bean had passed along to a family in Minnesota, who then brought it to the Pacific Northwest, where they saved its cherished seed over multiple generations before sharing it with Seed Savers Exchange.

Åsmund Asdal—a Norwegian agronomist who serves as coordinator of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault—has most definitely seen his fair share of exquisite rare seeds.

Still, he could not help but admire the 'Norwegian Pencil' bean when Lee Buttala, executive director of Seed Savers Exchange, prepared to pour a handful of the variety into a tall glass cylinder as part of a ceremony that took place last February to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the seed vault's opening in the Arctic Circle. (SSE is the only nongovernmental organization that backs up seed in Svalbard.)

"As Åsmund was looking at the seeds, a look came over his face that I recognized well from seed swaps I have attended across the United States,"

*LOOKING BACKWARDS TOWARDS INCREASED FUTURE FOOD SECURITY
IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD*



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