

Thomas Atkinson

From: Seth Whitten
Sent: Wednesday, April 26, 2017 8:59 AM
To: Thomas Atkinson
Subject: FW: Seed libraries

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From: P.S. Holloway [mailto:amflfa863@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, April 07, 2017 5:34 PM
To: Seth Whitten <Seth.Whitten@akleg.gov>; Thomas Atkinson <Thomas.Atkinson@akleg.gov>; Rep. David Guttenberg <Rep.David.Guttenberg@akleg.gov>
Subject: Seed libraries

I'm not sure who called me, but your online message board wouldn't take my reply to your inquiry earlier today. You all get it!

I have read HB 197 relating to regulation of seed libraries, and quite frankly, I am mystified. Seed libraries, historically have been a way for community members to swap seeds, either those grown locally, or extra seeds gardeners did not use. It has matured into local seed saving where people take some seeds, grow them out, and if they prove successful, return seeds to the library. It is a nationwide program to promote preservation of heirloom, open pollinated seeds, amateur breeding, and the seeds already are not patented/genetically modified/owned by anyone. They are heirlooms-- older than you or me - hand-me-downs. You can get variation in seeds, you can select the best and share with others. The seeds are not commercially sold. Why this bill requires that they be labeled for sale is a mystery.

This legislation appears to be trying to regulate seed libraries by making the Div. of Ag responsible for policing these local efforts and adding a level of regulation that is, quite frankly, ridiculous. It limits the quantity of seeds one can exchange in a year. Why? If it is free, why should there be a limit? It also requires that the packages include species, variety, seller's name and address, etc. all of which are required by commercially sold seeds. In exchange for dollars, consumers have an expectation of seed quality and quantity. They can easily find out where the seeds come from and demand their money back if the seeds do not perform as advertised. But this is a free exchange. Seed libraries are also not bartering where you give something with an expectation of something in return. It is a free exchange to whomever wants to try something new or different. Like library books, the seeds are free, and there is no guarantee you are going to like ending!

A seed library makes no claims, and because the seeds come from open pollinated plants, there is absolutely no guarantee as to variety or even germination percentage. You know that going in. Part of the fun of seed libraries is you never really know what you will get. You might see a label for Black Valentine Beans, but in reality, they may have been pollinated by any bean in your garden. The seeds you return to the library may or may not be the same as the Black Valentine you started out with. The variation is expected and fun! And its free!

I don't know the reason for this bill, but I see it as an attempt to regulate something that cannot be regulated. Additionally, the Division of Ag is already stretched beyond its funding capacity. I doubt seriously if they have the time to police these voluntary seed swaps statewide.