

# Thomas Jefferson

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## Seed Saving on a Global Scale

**CARY FOWLER** is the Heritage Harvest Festival's Keynote Speaker

**T**homas Jefferson had a genuine enthusiasm for seed exchange and preservation and was passionate about passing along seeds to fellow gardeners. His excitement for botanical discoveries may have germinated with the Lewis and Clark expedition. From this expedition, he received a considerable number of seed varieties, including highly improved corn and bean varieties from Northern Plains Indian tribes.

The gardens of Monticello served as a laboratory for the exchange of new and unusual plants with family members, neighbors, and a national and international network of plant explorers and plantsmen. Jefferson himself served as a missionary of seeds for his novel collection of fruits, flowers, vegetables, and ornamental plants. He once wrote to André Thouin of the Jardin de Plantes in Paris that his seeds "came safely to hand and were committed to our best seedsmen, in order that they might be preserved and distributed so as to become general."

Each year a "Seed Swap" is held at the annual Heritage Harvest Festival at Monticello to celebrate this pioneering spirit of seed sharing and cultivation. This year's featured speaker is an expert on the

worldwide effort to save seeds. Cary Fowler, American agriculturalist and the former executive director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust and current senior advisor to the trust, will speak at the 7th annual festival, September 6-7, 2013.

Fowler's international career in the conservation and use of crop diversity spans almost 40 years. In the 1990s, he headed the International Conference and Programme on Plant Genetic Resources at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which produced the UN's first-ever global assessment of the state of the world's plant genetic resources. He drafted and supervised negotiations of FAO's Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources, adopted by 150 countries in 1996. That same year he served as special assistant to the Secretary General of the World Food Summit.

Currently he is a member of the boards of the New York Botanical Garden Corporation and Rhodes College, and he chairs the International Advisory Council of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. The Vault provides a secure safety backup for the world's seed collection and is the single largest collection of crop diversity worldwide. Inside the Seed Vault,



**Cary Fowler, American Agriculturalist and Senior Advisor to the Global Crop Diversity Trust.**

Fowler and his team work to ensure that the world's food supply has the diversity needed to address the omnipresent threats of pests, diseases, and climate change.

Fowler has been profiled by CBS' *Go Minutes*, *The New Yorker*, and the *New Scientist*, and is the author of several books on the subject of crop diversity and more than 100 articles on the topic in agriculture, law, and development journals.