

ABOUT US

The Next Epoch Seed Library (NESL) is stocked with the seeds of weedy plants who live alongside us in urban and disturbed habitats. Co-evolved with dense human populations, these plants are our indispensable companions as we inhabit novel ecosystems and journey through climate chaos together.

ACTIVITIES

Responding to an era defined by the massive ecological impacts of capitalism, colonialism and resource extraction, we collect, store, and share weedy seeds, building connections among local communities of plants and people as we go. Focused on local seed circulation, since 2015 we have shared thousands of seed packets, alongside how-to zines, exhibitions, workshops, walks, curriculum materials, deep time seed burial events, and seed swaps.

COLLECTION

The plants we refer to as weeds encompass a broad swath of vegetation: disturbance-adapted native plants; introduced, naturalized plants whose range and habitat are somewhat stable; species whose ranges are expanding poleward due to climate change; recently arrived species who act invasively in certain contexts. We collect these species in areas heavily impacted by contemporary human activity, like vacant lots, street verges, and Superfund sites. We also collect from sites impacted in the past, like abandoned infrastructure or ancient agricultural fields. We collect and circulate seeds at a local or bioregional scale.

GOALS

We work to move plants from the background to the foreground of contemporary urban life. We encourage people to reflect on their own role in the adaptation and success of weedy plants. We hope to invite nuance into conversations around native, introduced, and hybrid plants and ecosystems. We strive to strengthen reciprocal networks of plants and people, contributing to the emergence of ecologically just communities in urban habitats.

Further reading: nextepochseedlibrary.com/reading



NEXT EPOCH SEED LIBRARY

MINI-MANIFESTO

Some notes

and provocations

on seeding

the next epoch

in collaboration

with weeds



NESL 2025
share & share alike

NESL recognizes that...

... our ecosystems are changing rapidly and irrevocably as disturbances from industrialization, globalization, and climate change impact the land.

...plants can be partners in adapting to these changes if we meet them where they are.

... the word “weed” describes a cultural category of plants that are not wanted nor intentionally planted, and not a botanical category of inferior plants.

... many plants described as “weedy” are well-adapted to landscape disturbance, acting to hold soil in place, absorb stormwater, and create habitat, food and medicine until the land becomes habitable again for other lifeforms.

...disturbance-adapted plants of all origins can be healers in habitats impacted by human activity.

... no plant species is inherently invasive; some plants act invasively in certain contexts.

... plant species experiencing “ecological release” in new or rapidly changing environments may act invasively, creating monocultures that exclude other lifeways.

... invasive growth is often a symptom of environmental disturbance, rather than the cause, and serves to notify us of an ecosystem out of balance.

... human communities can find joy and empowerment in connecting to plants, a form of beneficial, nourishing solidarity with beings that are vastly different, but with whom humans are deeply entangled.

...humans have always been in partnership with plants, evolving and migrating together around the world for time immemorial.

...weedy plants are accessible, ubiquitous, overlooked and undervalued.

NESL asks...

...how can weedy plants help us reconsider traditional ideals of beauty?

...how can weedy plants guide urban-dwelling humans in re-establishing ties to the land?

...what does seed collecting have to offer in habitats where humans are alienated from authentic, enduring connections to more-than-human life, land, and ancestral knowledge forms?

... how might appreciation of weedy plants retrain the Euro-Western human eye to see value in greenspace that is often perceived as ‘messy’ ‘unkempt’ and even ‘dangerous’?

...how can we conspire with weedy plants to create low-maintenance, high-impact greenspaces in urban and disturbed habitats that have been systematically deprived of resources?

...can positive interactions with introduced plant life help increase empathy around human migration?

...what can weeds teach us about decolonization and resistance to inhumane borders and boundaries?

...what do weedy species reveal about the relationship between capitalism, land theft, and ecological degradation?

...what can weeds contribute to our understanding of biocultural diversity and plant-human collaboration across time?

...what does ethical, respectful, conscientious seed collecting look like in urban and disturbed habitats?

...how do weeds help us restore an ethic of mutual tending between people and plants in urban and disturbed habitats?

...what do we owe our plant relatives?

