



UJAMAA SEEDS

Maryland's
Culturally Meaningful
Heirloom Seed Company

ujamaaseeds.com

Gardening with heirloom seeds not only preserves heritage varieties of flowers, vegetables, and fruits, but using heirloom seeds contributes to biodiversity and a more resilient and sustainable food system.



U J A M A A COOPERATIVE FARMING ALLIANCE

“growing BIPOC seed growers”





ABOUT UCFA

The **Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance** (UCFA), is a program under the non-profit organization STEAM ONWARD Inc. As a BIPOC led collective, UCFA recruits and supports emergent and seasoned growers who cultivate heirloom seeds

and grow culturally relevant plants for food and healing. UCFA recognizes the need for increased diversity in agriculture and in the seed industry specifically. We are bridging the gap between prospective BIPOC growers and heirloom seed companies.

UCFA PROGRAM AREAS

SEED FARMING EDUCATION: At UCFA we are passing on the ancient and traditional knowledge of seed saving through several programs and projects. UCFA Seed Hubs are localized collectives of BIPOC farmers and gardeners organized around growing, cleaning, and processing culturally meaningful heirloom seeds. UCFA supports ten Seed Hubs across the nation. Through the *Ujamaa Academy* and the *Ira Wallace Seed Farming School*, UCFA is providing BIPOC growers instruction in seed farming and seed saving via online classes as well as on-site face-to-face learning. UCFA is passing on the tradition of seed farming and seed saving to youth through our *Collardz 4 Kidz Project*, and our *Wangari Maathai Food Forest Project*. In addition, UCFA is identifying and interviewing seasoned BIPOC growers of culturally meaningful seeds nationwide through the *Heirloom Garden Oral History Project*.

SEED FARMING: Through partnerships such as the *Seed Farm at Princeton* and the *Utopian Seed Project*, as well as partnerships with other universities and organizations, UCFA grows rare, culturally-meaningful seed crops and pursues research on the art and science of heirloom plants. In addition, on four acres in Upper Marlboro, Maryland UCFA is converting *Tayman's Field*, a formerly terraced organic vegetable farm into a seed farming demonstration site.

SEED SALES: Gardening with heirloom seeds preserves heritage varieties, and contributes to biodiversity, as well as a more resilient and sustainable food system. Through *UJAMAA SEEDS*, we cultivate and distribute culturally meaningful heirloom seeds mainly online, but also at conferences, and at market day events. In addition to being organized by plant types, the *UJAMAA SEEDS* collections are organized online by geographic and ethnic/cultural traditions. Gardeners can search varieties via our African Garden, Asian Garden, Caribbean Garden, European Garden, First Nation Garden, Latin American Garden, and Southern Soul Garden collections.



SEED FARMING

Seed farmers grow crops in a way that increases the quality and expands the quantity of plants for the purpose of selling the seeds to other farmers and gardeners. Heirloom seed farming can be an additional revenue stream for farmers, gardeners, and growers as demand far outstrips supply. On a small plot of land, farmers and gardeners can make a profit from seed farming. In fact, many folks take up seed growing as a side business, rather than as their sole source of income.

At UCFA we view seeds as more than a commodity, but also as vessels of culture. The rise of commercialized agriculture over the past century, has resulted in a 75% decrease in food crop diversity. With the decline in regional food crop diversity, not only are many heirloom varieties becoming extinct, but regional farming traditions, and regional cultural cuisines also risk erasure. Within each seed is life that sustains us, and life that provides us with connections to the past, and to our ancestors.



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