

Join the Inaugural Cohort of the Ira Wallace Seed School

The mission of The Ira Wallace Seed School is to increase the number of BIPOC growers of heirloom seeds.



Introduction to Ethical Seed Farming

March 2024 - November 2024

APPLICATION DEADLINE: February 15, 2024

<https://ujamaafarms.com/seed-farming-class>

This online seed farming course aims to equip growers with the knowledge and skills necessary to become successful long-term seed stewards.



This course is being facilitated by **Amirah Mitchell** of **Sistah Seeds** and **Reggie Blackwood** of **Southern Exposure Seed Exchange** along with seed farming mentors from across the Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance (UCFA) community.



The Ira Wallace Seed School is a program of the Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance with support from numerous partners.



You are hereby invited to join the inaugural cohort of the

Ira Wallace Seed School

Introduction to Ethical Seed Farming

Presented by Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance

March – November 2024

We invite all farmers, gardeners and lovers of plants — and especially people from communities long excluded from participation in the commercial seed industry — to join us for our first 9-month online seed farming course. Facilitated by **Amirah Mitchell of Sistah Seeds** and **Reggie Blackwood of Southern Exposure Seed Exchange** and featuring mentors from across the Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance (UCFA) community, this course aims to equip growers with the knowledge and skills necessary to become successful long-term seed stewards.

Instead of buying packets of seed each year, what if your community produced your own seeds? Instead of relying on existing seed companies, what if you started one yourself?

WHY SEED FARMING?

- Preserve culturally meaningful plant varieties that are at risk of disappearing.
- Grow, save, and adapt crops that work well in your bioregion.
- Share seeds with your friends, family, and broader community.
- Sell seeds yourself or on contract with other seed companies.
- Deepen your connections to crop plants and to all they can teach us.

Over the last century, millions of culturally important crop varieties have been lost forever. Meanwhile, land access has become ever more challenging, and traditional knowledge of crop preservation has been forgotten or even suppressed. Most farmers and gardeners now expect to buy their seeds every year. Together, we can rekindle the art of seed saving that humans have maintained across the globe for over 10,000 years.

RACIAL EQUITY COMMITMENT

Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance prioritizes supporting BIPOC people (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) as a fundamental part of our mission. Land access and land-based skills have been stripped from our communities across generations, up to the present day. Our goal is to bring these skills back into our communities. As such, at least **80% of available slots in this**

course are reserved for BIPOC participants. (There will be times throughout the course when BIPOC and non-BIPOC students and instructors will gather separately for certain discussions.)

Our long-term goal is for mentors and instructors to be at least 80% BIPOC too, but — given the historic exclusion of BIPOC people from the seed industry — we expect that it may be a few years before we reach this threshold. In the meantime, our goal is that **at least 50% of instructors, guest lecturers, and mentors will be BIPOC practitioners.**

We encourage you to sign up along with friends and family, and especially other growers in your bioregion — as mentors will be assigned based on regional expertise and we want at least a few growers from each bioregion.

COURSE COMMITMENTS

Land-Based Activities: Participate in growing at least 2 seed crops during the growing season. You can do this by yourself, with a group of other students, or in partnership with a farm or community garden.

- Students will produce one “dry-seeded” seed crop, examples of which include:
 - Beans and peas
 - Okra
 - Sorghum
 - Corn
- Students will produce one “wet-seeded” seed crop, examples of which include:
 - Tomatoes
 - Eggplants
 - Watermelon
 - Cucumbers
- Students will participate in processing these seeds, including harvesting, separating seeds from “chaff”, cleaning and drying seeds for storage.
- Students will be expected to take detailed photos and/or videos and to keep notes throughout the year about the crops they grow.
- **OPTIONAL:** participation with the regional cohort in your area (where available), which may include in-person meet-ups, farm days, co-growing, volunteer opportunities, etc.

Computer-Based Activities: Students will be expected to participate in regular online courses, discussions, and Q&A sessions from mid-March through mid-November 2024.

- Students must commit to 2-4 hours/month of reading, listening, and watching videos on your own time, in addition to regular online sessions with instructors.
- Students will need online access and be able to use the apps Zoom, Mighty Networks, and WhatsApp.
- Students must attend a monthly class session with their fellow students, your choice of either:

- Second Tuesday of the month (7pm - 9pm EST) *or*
- Third Saturday of the month (10am - noon EST)
- Students must participate in at least 4 (out of 7) opportunities with guest speakers on seed ethics and culture (dates/times TBD, but mostly evenings – with an option of submitting written or video discussion of the recorded material instead of attending a live discussion on Zoom).
- Students must complete monthly assessments on their own time, an additional 30-90 minute commitment per month.
- Students have the *option* of attending virtual office hours with knowledgeable seed mentors, including:
 - Ira Wallace of Southern Exposure Seed Exchange & UCFA
 - Nate Kleinman of Experimental Farm Network & UCFA
- Students will be required to complete a capstone project where they take their records for the year and analyze the inputs and outputs of one seed crop.

Students who complete the requirements of the course will receive:

- A certificate of course completion from the Ira Wallace Seed School
- Personalized support in building business connections, including assistance obtaining paid seed contracts for 2025 and beyond.
- A crucial set of skills to bring back to your communities!

COURSE PREREQUISITES

All prospective students will be expected to come to the course with intermediate or advanced understanding of how to grow plants, including experience determining when a crop is ready to be harvested (either for food or seed). This doesn't mean you need to be a professional farmer!

We expect and welcome students with a range of experience, but the Ira Wallace Seed School will not be offering introduction-level growing information, such as weeding or watering, during our 2024 course. However we do hope to offer this course in the future with a special mentorship cohort for beginning gardeners, so [please put your name on this waiting list](#) if this interests you.

NOTE ON LAND ACCESS: All prospective students will be expected to grow plants during the 2024 growing season. If you are unsure about your access to land next year, please feel free to apply and keep us posted on your land situation — depending on your region, we might be able to assist you in finding a good place to grow.

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Community agreements will be drafted and discussed by the Ira Wallace Seed School Committee and shared with students before being finalized. It is understood that students will

consent to abide by community agreements and will be removed from the course for any major violations. Student participation will be at the discretion of the instructors.

SLIDING SCALE TUITION

We estimate that conducting this course will cost UCFA about \$20,000 during the 2024 season, including compensating instructors, guest speakers, curriculum development, technical assistance, student coordination and assessments. We expect to be able to handle up to 50 students this year. We want to offer at least 25 partial sliding scale rates with the option of work-trade. Therefore, our base price for the course is \$650 in total.

We encourage people to apply regardless of their ability to pay. We also encourage those who can afford to pay more to contribute more, so that we can offer more sliding scale and scholarship opportunities.

We would like to offer work-trades for students who can help reduce our operating costs, including doing regional coordination and technical assistance. There is a place on the application to indicate if you might be interested in this option.

TO APPLY... [Please fill out the application here.](#)

To use the link above, **FIRST DOWNLOAD** this PDF to your computer.

Or use to link on the UCFA website: <https://ujamaafarms.com/seed-farming-class>

Deadline to apply is February 15, 2024. If slots are available, we will continue to accept applications until March 8, 2024.

We will contact students in early February and finalize the class list and wait list by February 25th, 2024.