

FALL 2025

Newsletter of the Creston Community Seed Bank Society

We respectfully acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional and unceded territory of the Ktunaxa Nation.

Seed Bank News

2025 Isolation Experiment

Beyond Seedy Saturday and the annual Seed Bank plant sale, our society also conducted a significant isolation experiment during the growing season at the College of the Rockies gardens. In February, two of our Board of Directs, Christina and Brenda, submitted a grant application to Columbia Basin Trust to subsidize the experiment and that application resulted in a budget of just under \$2900. As part of the submission process, presentations were made to RDCK meetings for Area A, B, C and Town of Creston, all of which approved at least a portion of our grant application (Thank you, Columbia Basin Trust!).

The experiment addressed challenges observed by Home Growers: in recent warm summers, the traditional method of isolating fruit with small mesh bags was less effective, leading to poor fruit set and a shortage of seeds for Seedy Saturday and local seed preservation.

To tackle this, we tested “whole row isolation,” building high tunnels from galvanized tubing and covering them with ProtekNet insect netting. Half of each tomato variety row was isolated using this technique, while the remainder relied on the legacy bagging method.

After receiving the grant and purchasing materials, we held a July volunteer event to install the tunnels and bag flowers. The hoops were anchored with rebar and covered with netting to isolate 6-8 plants per row; the other half of the row was fitted with mesh bags. Board members later checked and released pollinated flowers and developing fruit in the non-tunnel half of the row.



A row of tomatoes that have been isolated with ProtekNet insect netting.

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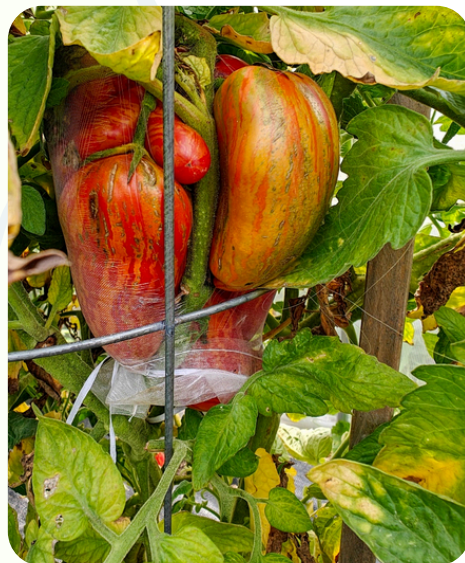
Mission Statement

To steward a diverse collection of seeds and knowledge that contributes to a resilient regional food system.

2025 Isolation Experiment Cont'd

After all this effort, what conclusions have been reached? Unfortunately, or fortunately, summer 2025 didn't have the 40-degree heat waves that were making bagged fruit unviable, so we don't yet have the answer to the main hypothesis of the experiment. However, an unanticipated difference between the two methods that we observed was the volume and quality of the fruit to select from, the large reduction of work effort and reduced handling of individual bags and marking yarn for isolation. Ongoing effort was vastly reduced as bags that were not monitored and removed often develop crowded, misshapen, and insect infested fruit as in the photo.

Overall, our experiment was very successful, and, through some frugal budget management, we will have enough leftover grant money to expand the experiment into next year – an extension that is within the guidelines of the grant.



A cluster of Plum Tigris tomatoes that were bagged by hand but not released once the fruit had set. The entire cluster of misshapen fruit had to be discarded as insects had infested the cluster after the fruit growth burst the mesh bag.



ASK PAT

Pat Huet, is our CCSB mastermind, who served on the Board of Directors since it became a Society. More importantly, she guided a long succession of volunteers developing and maintaining Creston's growing seed bank. Now retired, Pat is offering advice through the CCSB newsletter to help spread the seeds of knowledge.

Question

Why should you remove weeds and dead plants from your vegetable garden before winter? Of the following answers, what do you think is the most important reason for doing this?

- A. Make your garden look nice so neighbours don't complain.
- B. Reduce overwintering sites for insect pests like flea beetles, white cabbage butterfly, cutworms, pea weevils, and stink bugs.
- C. Reduce gardening chores in the spring.
- D. Plant cover crops.

**See last
page for
Pat's Advice**



Gardener Highlight - Gail & Ross Nelson

This quarter, we feature Erickson gardeners Gail and Ross Nelson, who have transformed a once-shady, creek-side property into a productive oasis with several dozen beds of vegetables, berries, fruits, and grapes. After gardening in Kamloops, Nelson, and Sweden, they settled in Erickson, where their property includes sandy soil east of the creek and clay to the west. By selectively removing trees, they greatly improved sun exposure, enabling them to dig numerous new beds over six years.

On the east side of the creek, 8–12 beds of root vegetables thrive in sandy soil, supported by drip irrigation for beans, squash (including Red Kuri, butternut, honey nut), and an experimental crop of sweet potatoes under low-tunnel hoops.

Crossing a small bridge, there's a small enclosure of Muscovy ducks for pest control. A hothouse contains several varieties of sweet and spicy peppers. In the greenhouse, bagged pepper flowers and fruit highlight their seed-saving work with the Creston Seed Bank.



A pepper flower in the hothouse, carefully bagged to ensure isolation from cross pollination.



Aronia (chokeberries)

The property's west side features flower beds, hops (for homebrewing), Thompson grapes, and a berry section with raspberries, blackberries, currants, and Aronia berries. A sunny plot contains 20–30 tomato varieties, staked and drip-irrigated, including Seed Bank favorites and heirlooms. Other areas hold herbs, eggplants, peas, pole beans, fruit and nut trees — all chosen for fresh eating and winter preserving, reflecting the Seed Bank's food security mission.

With decades of gardening experience, Gail and Ross offer these tips: Expect some failures, especially with new crops; keep a detailed garden journal and label everything; use pest deterrents like fencing and ducks; and invest in a soil moisture meter to accommodate varied soils and ensure proper watering.

Read the full story of our August garden visit with the Nelsons on our website.

3 ways to become a member

Annual membership cost is \$20 / person

1. Go to our [website](#) and fill out an application online
2. Go to our website, [download](#) the form and mail it to us
3. Purchase your membership at any of our fundraising events around town.

Board of Directors

(March 2025-March 2026)

- Christina Grondin, Chair
- Kevin Dribnenki, Vice Chair
- Brenda Bruns, Treasurer
- Michele Trumpour, Secretary
- Lisa Benschop, Director at Large

Board Update

Since the spring plant sale, the Seed Bank Board of Directors has been busy planting the seeds of future growth — literally and figuratively. Like good gardeners who start planning and seeding well in advance of planting, we've been nurturing new ideas through strategy meetings and hands-on experiments in the College gardens.

Here's what we've been up to:

- Held a series of strategic planning meetings to shape our goals and priorities for the coming years.
- Delegated key responsibilities to Board members and committees, with new focus areas including community education & outreach, fundraising, and seed science & research.
- Welcomed a new Board member, Lisa Benschop, to the team.

Meanwhile, several experiments and grow-outs are under way in the College gardens:

- A Plum Tigris tomato trial to test genetic purity of our seed stock following signs of possible cross-pollination.
- Annual seed grow-outs of specific tomato and pepper varieties.
- An experiment in tomato isolation techniques, using low tunnels to prevent cross-pollination and reduce the required isolation distance.

We look forward to sharing results from this summer's experiments — as well as updates on the Seed Bank's evolving vision — in the next quarterly newsletter.

Pat's Advice

Answer B is the most important reason as many insect pests overwinter in weeds, brush, and frost-killed plants. Although they can fly in from elsewhere, if they have no winter home in your garden, their populations will take time to build up. This will give you a chance to deal with them before your produce is destroyed.