



SUSTAINABLE SEED COMPANY

Certified Organic

Sustainable Seed Company is located in Round Valley, in Mendocino County, California. Farmer John Fendley's fifteen acres are surrounded by Reservations of seven tribes of Native Americans.

A young company, Sustainable Seeds is finding multiple niches. Retail packet sales, bulk packaging, rare grains, homegrown seed, you name it, Sustainable Seed Company fills special needs for growers that crave that hard-to-find tobacco or wheat variety, and offers sustainably grown heirlooms to the masses. All together, they sell over 1800 different varieties of seed! The website also offers a full range of how-to books, and an assortment of tools hand-forged by a local family business.



A few items you might not find elsewhere:

- A sealed supply of 25 essential vegetable seeds, in case of emergency.
- For pasta lovers: Gabba De Farro and Kamut brand wheat varieties.
- For those who want to roll their own cigars, or chicken owners who use tobacco dust to control mites: over 150 varieties of tobacco.
- For backyard poultry raisers: a package that includes seeds of forage grains like flax and oats, plus peas and pumpkins, to support up to ten chickens.

A combination of experiences led John Fendley to seeds. The founder and now part owner of Sustainable Seed Company began his company in 2008 after owning a nursery business, and working as an environmental planner for the state of Texas. His business experiences taught him that economic efficiency and environmental sustainability can go hand-in-hand. Later, when Fendley spent time studying native herbs and collecting and growing seeds in Central America, his eyes were opened to the disappearance of many varieties of open-pollinated seeds. That influential trip, and a look at a 1983 Seed Savers inventory that contained 79 types of broccoli, a mere handful of which are available today, pushed him into the seed-growing trajectory. Two passions—sustainability and seed growing—melded.

Sustainable Seed Company's headquarters is in a remote valley surrounded by mountains. Protected from the wind-blown pollen of unwanted varieties, the staff of 13 can securely grow 20-30% of the seed sold by the company, with many of

the rest contracted out. “In the mornings, when the air is cool, the whole staff is out planting,” says Farmer John. For four years, before the company could afford pollination cages, every squash plant was pollinated by hand, and tagged and covered in the early morning before the bees started flying.

A searcher by nature, John Fendley is always on the lookout for “new” heirlooms, and receptive to calls from gardeners who are desperate to save, for example, a certain squash that had been hand-carried from the Black Sea to Nebraska and safeguarded for generations. As he and his staff rescue such varieties from extinction, they also work to improve open-pollinated lines by roguing out off-types. “It takes five years to improve a line,” Farmer John states, and requires growing “hundreds more plants than you need.”

Sustainability takes many forms at Sustainable Seeds Company. If there is one motto the company lives by, it is “Do things that make a difference.” In that spirit, Fendley has started a bee rescue service, which removes hives from where they are not wanted to where they can be used by farmers. Depending on the season, 60-100% of the farms power is produced by wind turbines and an array of solar panels. Land is sloped away from the creek to protect the water quality and the salmon. Seed packets are made from recycled materials, and bulk seed is sold in reusable cotton bags. The list goes on.

A Few Words of Wisdom from Sustainable Seed Company:

- Small, simple changes can have a big impact over time.
- We need to teach our children about the importance of the seed by planting seeds.
- Support a young farmer. Buy their crops, give them moral support and let them know you value them.
- There is no such thing as cheap food.