

SEED GROWING

Most plants start from seeds unless they are cutting grown, layered or cloned from tissue culture.

There are not many plants that do not start from seed, one that comes to mind is our eating bananas which are grown from suckers.

I heard a story that in ancient times bananas were breed to be seedless, so we now find in the common eating banana the line down the centre where seeds would have been, but no more.

This is not completely true as there are lots of different types of bananas which do produce seeds and a search of the internet will likely amaze you on the seed varieties available.

A plant which has become totally dependent on man taking the seeds and planting them, so the species will survive, is corn or maize.

Once again a plant which mankind has developed from crosses hundreds of years ago to form the plant with the cobs that are common today.

If a mature cob falls onto the ground and the seeds germinate, because of their closeness they choke off each other and do not prosper.

When the kernels are remove by man and planted individually they grow well dependent on conditions.

The recent article I wrote on Dragon Fruit has resulted in a lot of phone calls and emails from gardeners showing an interest in growing this cacti.

The shipment several weeks ago came from Vietnam and my inquiries as to further shipments have not been answered.

However a week ago we spotted a few Dragon Fruit in a smaller Countdown in Palmerston North which were obviously old fruit left over from the earlier shipment.

The staff were not familiar with the product as they were going off which did not concern me as I wanted more seed.

My idea is to grow a good number of plants and sometime next year make them available to any one that would like to grow this interesting cacti.

I am surprised that the fruit actually had viable seeds in them as MAF usually has imported food stuffs irradiated for all the reasons that they believe is better for us and the environment.

Either the Dragon Fruit was not blasted with radiation or maybe the seeds were able to survive.

One of the annoying aspects of this irradiation process is that imported split peas are treated which is absurd as they would never germinate once split. It means they stay as hard as rocks when cooking soup instead of becoming mushy as they should do.

One of the concerning aspects with seeds is that multinational companies are endeavoring to take control of food seeds for their own personal gains.

A phrase that is sometimes seen is along the lines of 'He who controls the seeds, controls the food supply and controls the world.'

Far fetched? When you hear of companies that control water supplies in poor or richer countries (Detroit America) and they shut off the water from those that can't afford it you start to realise what ends some companies will go to for money.

Monsanto is one such company that through their GMO seeds and purchase of traditional seed companies have acquired greater control over seeds both GE and conventional.

Not all have worked in their favour as we see from Canada. I quote:

"Thirteen years ago when GM soya and rapeseed was introduced in Canada (and in the US) the Corporations and Government told farmers that GM would increase yields, be more nutritious, use less chemicals, and feed a hungry world.

Now we will always have a sustainable agriculture, they claimed.

The Canadian Department of Agriculture figures states: Canola yields have decreased at least ten percent and soya at least fifteen percent, but worst of all, farmers are using three to five times more chemicals because of the GM superweeds that have developed.

The reality is that the nutritional content of all crops are down fifty percent of what they were before GMOs were introduced and now we have less yields and more chemicals used, exactly the opposite of what Monsanto promised."

There is some speculation that legislation and TTP could have fish hooks whereby you are not allowed to collect your own seed of food crops from mature plants and even worse share them with your gardening friends. Beware Gardener's rights are possibly being eroded as are other human rights.

Sometimes gardeners are their own worst enemy when it comes to seeds.

Plants; both vegetable and flowers produce seeds when they reach maturity and will dispatch their seed as nature determines.

Flower plants are a very good example of this, when they set seed that seed will fall where they were growing or be carried by wind or water to a more distant space.

On the soil in the right conditions they germinate and produce numerous seedlings. These are what we call self sown seedlings and are free.

Where some gardeners make a mistake is that these young plants are confused with weeds and so they kill them off. When you can determine the difference between a weed seedling and a flower

seedling you will save yourself a lot of money buying new plants.

On the road frontage where I live, I made a flowering garden about 3 years ago with a range of flowering plants, some annuals some perennials. They are allowed to preform as nature dictates which means they flower, seed and in the case of the annuals die. Taking out the dead plants I always shake them over bare soil areas. The frontage will look bare and not so nice for a time until the seedlings develop into flowering plants at which time the area looks really great with a lovely show. (All at no further cost)

There are annual straw flowers (*Helichrysum*), Russel Lupins and Gazania along with perennials; geranium, gladioli, Jerusalem artichokes and climbing roses.

Pansy and violas are two very good self seeding plants which will pop up all over the place when allowed to.

If you have ever grown *nicotiana rustica* and allowed to mature you will have young tobacco plants popping up all over the place. My original came with some succulent plants that was given as a gift.

An awesome plant that catches hundreds of small pest insects on its sticky leaves, better than any man made trap. Petunias are related being part of the Solanaceae family along with tomatoes and nightshade.

Next time you are weeding your gardens try and distinguish what are weeds and what are flower seedlings and see if you can get some displays for free.