

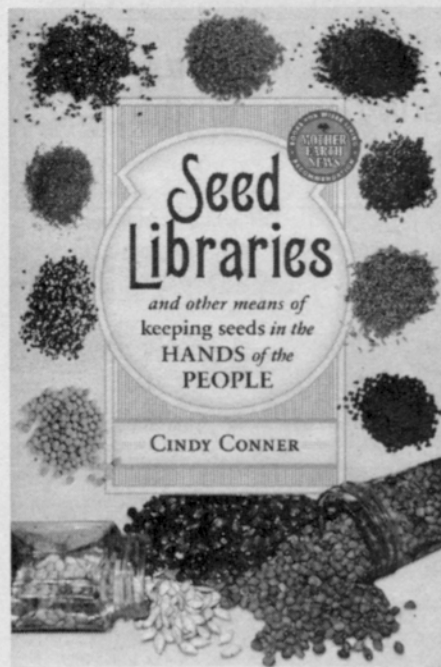
sections that carried the day for corporate privilege. Downstream of Trojan Horse, community groups, maculture activists, and informed owners of every stripe turned increasingly to saving their own seeds and finding ways to disseminate them. Seed Saver's Exchange, founded in 1975 as True Seed Exchange, has its roots in this upwelling of concern. The advent of genetic engineering applied to seeds in the mid-70s and commercialized in the 80s gave further impetus to the movement for popular sovereignty.

The tale of librarians stepping up to support community empowerment is inspiring and seems on all counts to be a good-news story, but it's important to remember as we work to expand this movement that powerful interests have worked long and hard to take control of seeds, plants, animals, and food; that the process has a long history deeply embedded in the vile story of empire; and that seed libraries, like any community effort that stands out from the crowd, are subject to pushback, suppression, and outright violence if the stakes are seen as high enough. Does this mean that people shouldn't set up seed libraries? No, but it does suggest that we should expand the movement to a point beyond which it cannot easily be snuffed. It means that locally, the exact placement of seed banks and storage facilities should be known to people in seed library organizations and perhaps not broadcast to other authorities. It means that seed exchanges should involve many more seed growers, which are the true aim of seed libraries in the first place, are even more important than the libraries themselves.

When you come across the concept of a seed library, it smacks you in the face as an idea you should have thought of long ago. That's how new things come into the world. If the common heritage of seeds were not under threat, we wouldn't now need to be creating legal frameworks of protection for it. This should remind us that the marketplace, which has brought about seed monopoly and a holocaust of loss in seed and plant diversity, cannot be depended upon to meet public needs. Some things belong to the commons and must remain forever free in order for human communities

to thrive and be free and sovereign: air, water, forests, seed, land for farming, language, communications, government. Privatization is always a taking from the collective and common resource pool, and while sometimes this is beneficial, on the whole in our era, privatization has been a massively fraudulent meme to enrich the wealthy.

Books don't write themselves, but in a certain sense, this one was just waiting to be done. I'm glad Cindy Conner jumped on it. She has the background and



knowledge to do it justice. Practical and filled with good details, she has informed the discussion of seed library formation with her own experience. She declaims to tell us much about seed saving per se, about which there are many good resources, but the subject can't help but creep into the discussion of seed libraries and the movement to help people save seed. Seed libraries are not only about distribution of seed, but go hand in hand with education about sustainable and organic agriculture, gardening, plants, and of course seed production and storage. While many are broadly engaged in this work, from the Cooperative Extension Service to Master Gardeners, to many community groups and individuals, their focus has only incidentally been on seed saving. We can hope that the emergence of a literature of the social phenomenon

to complement the long-standing resources on genetic conservation itself will stimulate new connections and spread seed-saving ideas throughout the conventional world of garden education.

Covering the waterfront from physical facilities, questions of access to seeds, storage in library conditions, promotion and organizing challenges, seed swaps and seed gardens, *Seed Libraries* should become an indispensable resource for the next phase of library and seed exchange expansion. Highlighting individual seed libraries across the country, Conner is generous in praising early leaders of the movement and in pointing to pioneering efforts in different regions. Her bibliography and extensive notes support the scholarship she brought to this rich but slender volume. Filled with common sense, uncommon insight, grandmotherly affection, and pragmatic determination throughout, *Seed Libraries* brings together the right elements at the right time to feed a quiet revolution for local economic resurgence. Highly recommended. Δ

Scrying a New Botany

Review by Peter Bane

STEPHEN BARSTOW

Around the World in 80 Plants
An edible perennial vegetable
adventure in temperate climates
Permanent Publications. East Meon,
UK. 2014.

284 pp. all color illustrations. \$29.95.

WITH A REMARKABLY APT and witty title and a subtitle that tells the essence of the book, you might wonder why anyone would need to say more. *Around the World...* may be one of the highest expressions of globalism we are likely to see. I don't normally sing the praises of the process that is making humanity one people and Earth one place, but in the case of distributing plant diversity, we have to make an exception. The economic processes of globalism are a largely unmitigated disaster. The biotic reassembly of Pangaia may be the silver lining in that vast cloud, and a source of considerable succour to late

21st century people if they can look back on the holocaust of our time with any equanimity.

Stephen Barstow, evoking the mythical Phineas Fogg of globe-spanning balloon fame, has laid before his readers a veritable planetary feast of perennial vegetables. Standing on the shoulders of plant explorers and scholars before him: Sturtevant, Facciola, and others, he does them justice by acknowledging and improving on their work. Holder of the world's record for the greatest number of

loves his work, and he's very good at it. Candidates proliferate, and he uses the book as an opportunity to compare analog plants (onions in Europe and China, for example).

The basic structure of the book is just as its title declares, a region-by-region cataloging of important vegetable resources, in this case the author's favorites. He begins on the streets of London with samphire, a cruciferous plant that grows on the chalky cliffs of south Britain and which was wildly

year for the author.

Barstow winds up his grand tour back in his adopted Norway (and Scandinavia). There are familiar plants to be met along the way (Jerusalem Artichoke, Salsify, Asparagus, Ramps), and many, many exotics, both known and unknown (*mitsuba*, *udo*, bladder campion, gunnera). Familiar weeds are revealed to be edible (sow thistle) as are plants that you may already be growing for display (a raft of hostas). You cannot enter in here within coming away changed, and I suspect much for the better.

This book offers many pleasures, intellectual and gastronomic, and it rides high on a lifetime of geographic and scholarly investigation. It seems both close and touching in its intimacy with plants and people. I was tickled to see that *Permaculture Activist* was credited with a small role in the contemporary rediscovery of *Hablitia tamnoides*, a Caucasian climber long cultivated in Scandinavia but mostly ignored in its native land. Author Justin West read Barstow's article on the plant in *Permaculture Magazine, UK* in 2007, then determined to find it in the wild. He did, and then wrote about it for *PcA* in 2008, introducing many North Americans to this vigorous spinach-like plant. For the rest of the story, read the book. You too may have a role to play in discovering and preserving our vegetable heritage.

One notable complaint, and this has nothing to do with the writing or the photography, which are both stellar, nor with the choice of recycled, forest-friendly paper. The delicate and quite pale-appearing san-serif font in which the text is set is very hard to read. I admit that my eyes are not what they once were, but with tens, nay hundreds of millions of potential readers in the same boat today, I think it warrants pointing out that this was a poor choice. The critique is not artistic but functional and addressed to my good friend Tim Harland who oversees book and magazine design for Permanent Publications.

Around the World in 80 Plants brings honor to its author and publishers by contributing a magnificent work to the literature of permanent agriculture. Worth the effort to read, it belongs on the shelf of all serious gardeners. Δ

Wall-rocket, unlike its more famous relative, is heroically productive, bearing nine months of the year for the author.

plant species eaten in one salad (537), the author lives and gardens prodigiously at the back of Trøndheimfjord on the coast of Norway at 64°N latitude where he and his many plant accessions enjoy a cool but relatively mild climate supported by an ice-free ocean the year round.

Filled with history, botany, recipes, food and garden advice, and excellent photographs, the book provides a top-notch introduction to a world of mostly leafy green vegetables and some roots, exactly the crops that we might expect to do well within 100 miles of the Arctic Circle! As the author reminds us, he did not attempt to write a field guide, and a number of the plants have dangerous or deadly "confusion" analogs. He recommends readers source plants through edible nurseries rather than the ornamental trade because, as he observes, the edible nursery men and women are typically more careful in labeling.

Coining (or at least propagating) the term "edimental" to describe many of the gross or more of plants he discusses, Barstow goes well beyond his catchphrase 80 plants as these are merely the top-level species names that he lists. Within such rich categories as *Brassica oleracea*, the cabbage tribe, he explores not only various perennial kales and tree collards, but nearly a dozen other variants, most of which were novel to me. You can see where this is going. The man



popular in the 17th century. He describes it as more deadly than poison hemlock in the number it has killed, for the good price paid drove many earnest but unlucky harvesters literally over the cliff to their deaths. He cites Shakespeare as a source of insight to the baleful if delicious 'salat.'

So it is with wall-rocket, *Diplotaxis tenuifolia*, an Italian native that tastes much like its eponymous cousin *rucola*, or rocket, or as we know it from nouvelle cuisine, arugula. Wall-rocket, unlike its more famous relative, is heroically productive, bearing nine months of the