



## Biodiversity & Food

Biodiversity is not only important to the natural environment, but also to our crops and livestock. Reduced diversity of crops and livestock means fewer traits available for selective breeding to guard against diseases, insect pests, or changing climates. Biodiversity also impacts available pollinators and soil quality.

Plant varieties and animal breeds represent decades or centuries of careful selection for specific traits and adaptability to local conditions. Prior to industrialization, these varieties and breeds were not only essential to local human populations but also added to the special character of a place. Hundreds of varieties exist for many of our common vegetables, for example, each with very specific characteristics, tastes, and growing requirements.

Yet, the diversity of the species that feed us is being reduced at an alarming rate due to the spread of industrial agriculture, which relies on relatively few varieties and breeds.

The Greater Sudbury Food Charter, which highlights the importance of biodiversity to the environment and food crops, was approved by City Council in 2004. Groups in Greater Sudbury, like the Sudbury Food Connections Network, The Foodshed Project, and Eat Local Sudbury, are working to promote eating locally and enhancing the diversity of garden crops. Seed exchanges, a Biodiversity Garden Planner, and a Food Biodiversity Workshop series are examples of the many projects to help **YOU** participate in saving food diversity in your own backyard.



Photos: The Foodshed Project