

This is a guide for hosting swap meets for either seeds or vegetable plants. At Nabolagshager, some of our most successful community-building events have been swap meets. We gathered our experiences in this guide to encourage others to set up their own swapping activities.

How to organize community seed and plant swaps

COMMUNITY GATHERING OR A POLITICAL PROTEST MANIFESTED THROUGH KINDNESS AND SHARING?

Community swap events are a great place to explore the **sharing economy**. By facilitating a place where people can share their surplus, we rediscover **community kindness and the benefits of sharing**.

Through the act of swapping, we meet our peers on equal terms and bond over shared interests. We arrive with excess and leave with new treasures. We might have found new inspiration to connect with neighbours, friends and strangers. And **all for free**.

Community swap events may not save the world, but they are surely **a step in the right direction**.

YOUR ONE-DAY TICKET TO THE SHARING ECONOMY

Key to these events are the tradeable tickets that function as the currency for the day. For each seed packet or plant you bring to the swap, you are given one ticket to use for paying. Using money is simply not an option!

As you enter the venue, your seed packets or plants are traded for tickets. Ten plants give 10 tickets. These tickets then function as your currency during the event. The attendee finds a number of seed packets or plants equal to the number of tickets, and "pay" with these tickets as they leave.



Photo: Nabolagshager



The ideal location is a large, easily-accessible hall, ideal duration is 1 hour



Get the venue owner, local gardening associations, green NGOs, aspiring gardeners and corporate sponsors on board



Seed and plant swaps increase local seed circulation, spread knowledge and help build a community of food-growers

A COMMUNITY CALENDAR FOR SHARING SEEDS AND VEGETABLE PLANTS

We recommend scheduling seed swaps at the end of winter and vegetable plant swaps around mid-spring. You may also want to host an additional event at the end of spring, as many find they have too many plants at this time.





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BEST PRACTICES FOR A SUCCESSFUL SWAP MEET

Start planning 6-8 weeks before the event to give the attendees the time to sow extra seeds or propagate extra seedlings in due time to have something to swap. This also allows the event to build a network of partners and co-organizers and spread the word of the event.

The perfect length for these events is one hour. A shorter event is more effective, as it forces people to arrive at the same time, and creates an intense buzz. Beware that people often arrive early to get the best pick of tradeables, work that into your event: the long line outside the venue with people carrying plants and waiting for the door to open is a great photo opportunity.

Build anticipation online and offline: work proactively with your social media. Plan to publish posts on your main SoMe channels about the event and also on the Facebook event itself. Make a list of **relevant locally popular hashtags** regarding plants, sharing economy, sustainable lifestyles, and similar so your local plant lovers can find you. You can also **make posters and flyers** and spread in your community to enhance the invitation dissemination.

Convert seeds and plants into a community currency: the seeds brought into a swap can come from anywhere - as seeds harvested by a gardener, leftover seeds from last years, or spare seeds from a seed package you have bought. Remind people to label all seed packets clearly and encourage them to put at least 10 seeds in each packet. Also make sure that people bring plants that are healthy and pest-free and have been well cared for.

Co-organizers, community partners and volunteers: The events should seek to actively share knowledge about gardening as an important biodiversity- and community building activity. It is highly encouraged to team up with local gardening associations, environmental NGOs, or botany clubs for these events. You may also consider inviting corporate sponsors or district/ municipal partners if you find it will work in your context. If your community has a seed library, it is a good idea to invite them as it is a great way for the swapping to continue beyond the event.



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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 776665





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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EFFICIENT ATTENDEE FLOW

Planning the venue space for a seed swap

- Entry and exit point
- Tables + signs
- Ample volunteer space on one side of the tables
- Attendee space on the other side of the tables

Along the tables, volunteers are on one side, and attendees on the other side. On the tables, there are signs marking different plant families; 1) salad greens, 2) herbs, 3) peas and beans, 4) root vegetables, 5) cabbage family, 6) edible flowers, 7) onions, 8) tomatoes, chilis, and peppers, 9) cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, and similar, and 10) other.

At the entrance, 1-2 volunteers count the seed envelopes, and trade them for tickets. The seed envelopes are collected in a larger bin. A group of volunteers grabs stacks of seed envelopes and distribute them by category. These volunteers need to have some plant knowledge. The attendees can pick seed packets they want to "buy" with their tickets. Once they are happy finished, they approach the volunteer(s) by the exit, let them count the number of seed packages and hand in the equivalent number of tickets

Planning the venue of a plant swap

- Entry and exit point
- Several tables
- Ample attendee space on either side of the tables

The venue design for a plant swap is easier, as are the duties for volunteers. At the entrance, volunteers count the plants the attendees bring, and hand out the equivalent number of tickets. The attendees then bring their plants to the tables and spread them out where they find space. Attendees shop around the tables until they find plants they want themselves, that they "pay" for at the exit with their tickets.