

European  
Cooperative  
Programme  
for Plant  
Genetic  
Resources



**ECP/GR**

**A safety net  
for the future  
of our crop  
plants**





The European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR), founded in 1980, is a network in the truest sense: a partnership of like-minded individuals and organizations working to provide a safety net which conserves the crop plants on which we live, for today's and tomorrow's generations. By encouraging cooperation among relevant institutions, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) all over Europe, ECPGR promotes the preservation and use of crop diversity—which is essential for our welfare.



## FADING DIVERSITY

Although they are appealingly shiny, the apples we usually find on offer in stores all belong to the same few varieties—while several hundred were grown in the past! But the international market's demands are for standardized products—uniformity and price matter far more than quality. The consequences of this are harmful: our food culture is becoming impoverished and our plant heritage is disappearing. It's like destroying a plant library that has been accumulated by farmers and growers over thousands of years.



## HELPING AGRICULTURE

How can crops adapt to the ever-changing environment when crop genetic resources are becoming scarcer?

Breeders, farmers and professional organizations promoting on-farm conservation (such as NGOs) are always looking for singular and well-adapted varieties from the past as well as the present. They select among the existing diversity and breed from it to produce even more highly improved, adapted and nutritious varieties.

The more diversity is maintained in genebanks, in the fields and in the market, the more it can be used to develop crops for the future. When more is used, more is also maintained. It follows that the greater the demand for dietary diversity, the greater the number of conservationists, and the greater the diversity safeguarded.



# FRUITFUL CONSERVATION WORK

The seeds stored in genebanks, the projects for on-farm conservation, the knowledge gathered in databases –in the hands of dedicated professionals, both in the field and in the garden, all these conservation efforts bear fruit. All of us reap the benefit: whether by marvelling anew at ancient varieties in a garden collection, by seeing them being cultivated on a farm, or by buying them at a farm shop or in a store.

By taking an active interest in plant conservation activities of all kinds, we have a say in securing crops' diversity for the future.




Would you like to help in saving endangered crop varieties? Do you know of any organizations promoting on-farm conservation in your country? What have been your experiences with them?

*Your opinion is important to us!*

- **ProSpecieRara, Aarau, Switzerland:**  
[www.ProSpecieRara.ch](http://www.ProSpecieRara.ch)  
[info@prospecierara.ch](mailto:info@prospecierara.ch)
- **Garden Organic Coventry, UK:**  
[www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)  
[enquiry@gardenorganic.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@gardenorganic.org.uk)
- **Arche Noah, Schilttern, Austria:**  
[www.arche-noah.at](http://www.arche-noah.at)  
[info@arche-noah.at](mailto:info@arche-noah.at)

Photos courtesy of: Markus Zuber and ProSpecieRara (Switzerland)



YOU can become a member of the conservation community!

Contact the NGOs or other organizations in your country maintaining collections of seeds and fruit crops, including rare varieties: discover the beauty and fascination of diversity, take it home and grow it!

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**ECPGR**



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