

SEED AND TREE FESTIVAL

2016

What do we want to achieve collectively at this event?

This event is the first of its kind in Scotland – a celebration of the genetic and cultural diversity of the food we grow, and a rallying call to nurture this for future generations. What we would like to achieve by the end of the event is a statement of intent created collectively by those who attend: a statement of what we want to see for Scotland.

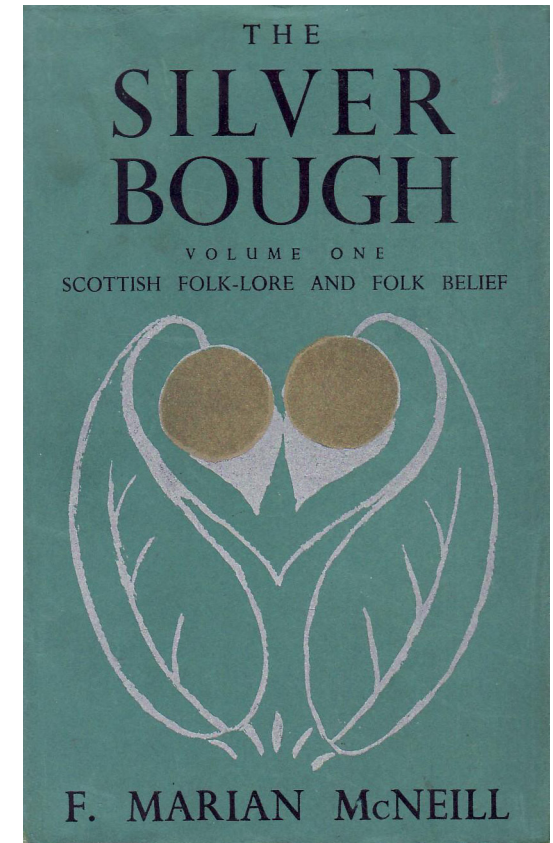
We believe that the food we grow, cook and eat should be a common good, not a commodity in the financial markets as it has more recently become. Good food means far more than just fuel to fill you up, and we believe in the value of what we are calling Scotland's living food culture – this encompasses the food we grow and rear, the land (or sea) that it comes from, the communities that keep it going, the dishes that it gets cooked into, and the people who are nourished by it. Two ideas that have inspired this event are the Seed Kist and the Silver Bough.

THE SEED KIST: a seed swap between past and future



The Seed Kist is intended as a showcase of the best seeds that grow locally – and a way of celebrating a seed collection. We think every community should have their own Seed Kist.

THE SILVER BOUGH: the roots of our orchard culture



In folklore the Silver Bough is a magical branch offered by the Queen of the Fairies as a passport to the land of everlasting youth, and is the name of the seminal text by folklorist F Marion MacNeill. The Silver Bough represents all the plants that reproduce from cuttings, can't be fit into a Kist, and therefore need to be looked after and protected in situ. However, the Kist is a powerful metaphor than can stand for both.

How do we create a Seed Kist for Scotland?

We will be framing our ideas under the banner of the Seed Kist: a unique treasure chest, intended as a showcase of seed diversity, which can also stand for a vision of a national treasure of our living food culture. During the day we will ask people to contribute ideas to the Seed Kist - suggestions in response to the following question:

What is Scotland's living food culture, and what do we want to pass on to our great-great grandchildren?

We will also pick up the thread just before lunch-time, drawing on the discussions in the morning sessions to share what we think is most important in terms of the legacy we leave for future generations.

Afternoon Seed Network discussion:

Most of the sessions in the afternoon are orchard focussed, but we also wanted to spend time thinking, with those who are interested, about whether and how a Scottish Seed saving network and/or library could be established.

We will be addressing the following questions:

What are the threats that could leave our great-great grandchildren with an empty Seed Kist?

How do we safeguard the genetic and cultural resilience of the food we grow in Scotland?

What are our wise next steps?

How can community orchards help to transform our food culture?

The reason for bringing Seeds and Orchards together is that both represent very valuable aspects of Scotland's living food culture.

The best way to propagate our favourite tree varieties is to grow new trees from cuttings (cloning) - but as the orchards we plant will outlive us, they need a supportive community to ensure that the best fruit trees endure. How can we avoid the massive grubbing up of Scottish orchards that happened the 50s because they were not considered viable?

In the afternoon we are exploring the importance of age old customs and ceremonies that honour the trees for what they provide. What is the purpose of such events and how do we ensure that diverse local food traditions survive instead of industrial monoculture? We think it is most important to explore these ideas by getting stuck into the afternoon's workshops – but if you have an orchard related thought to add to the Seed Kist suggestion box, this is the question we are asking:

What is Scotland's living food culture, and what do we want to pass on to our great-great grandchildren?

Drawing together a declaration from the day

At the end of the day we want to be able to read out statements for a vision for seed and tree diversity in Scotland. A film-maker will also film participants who are willing to read out their statements to camera.

The statements will then be edited together into a document which we hope will frame the aspirations for the future of those at the event, which we will circulate to all participants, along with the film.

After the event, we will be publishing updates on

www.commongoodfood.org

www.theurbanorchardproject.org