

## APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 3, 2019.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

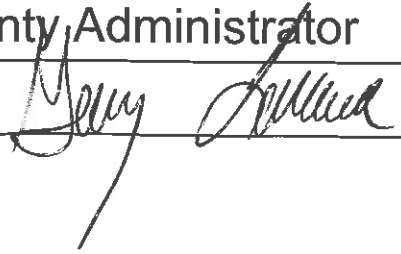
### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Botetourt County  
Program Title: Eagle Rock Seed Library  
Program Category: Community & Economic Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Cody Sexton  
Title: Assistant to the County Administrator  
Department: County Administration  
Telephone: (540) 928-2010 Website: www.botetourtva.gov  
Email: csexton@botetourtva.gov

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Gary Larrowe  
Title: County Administrator  
Signature: 

## **Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Awards Application**

### **Botetourt County – Eagle Rock Seed Library**

#### Executive Summary

In early 2018, librarians at the Eagle Rock branch library in Botetourt County recognized a growing need for agricultural education and resources in the County. The Eagle Rock branch is located in the most agrarian and rural part of the County, and many of its patrons have direct relationships to the family farms in the area. The patrons are keenly tied to the land. In order to offer an opportunity for patrons, especially children and teenagers, to engage with their agricultural roots, the branch library began a Seed Library.

The Seed Library functions much like a regular library. The library provides seed packets, many of which are rare and heirloom varieties, to patrons in exchange for the patrons returning seeds from their harvest back to the library at the end of the growing season. A plant sale has also been held to highlight the bounty of some of the participants in the Seed Library program. Moreover, the library continually seeks donations of rare and heirloom seeds to both add to the offerings of the program and to continue the legacy of local farming.

The goals of the program have been exceeded. Patrons are excited to branch out beyond the normal experiences offered by the library and have an opportunity to learn about and actually provide local produce. The program also ties into the Board of Supervisors' vision of promoting agricultural innovation and furthering the next generation of farmers in the County.

#### Background

Botetourt County has traditionally been an agricultural community. From sprawling orchards in the Daleville community in the south to cattle and dairy farms in Eagle Rock and Buchanan in the north, every part of Botetourt's land and history have been touched by agriculture in some way. The 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, has brought myriad challenges to the agricultural world in both Botetourt and abroad. As the

average age of the American farmer continues to creep up and as farmland continues to be converted into suburbanized development, a growing need to preserve and protect agrarian legacies has emerged.

In December 2014, the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors adopted a vision statement for the coming decades, highlighting the importance of agriculture to the future of the County, especially in the northern part of the County. Much discussion was held during the visioning process about the general decline of agriculture and building up the next generation of farmers. In response, most of the efforts of the vision were geared toward larger agricultural and economic development efforts. This included supporting dedicated staff for agricultural development, increasing marketing efforts for traditional farms and agritourism enterprises, and looking for opportunities to get local products from the farm to the table. All of these were grand and noble goals.

The libraries, however, saw a smaller yet still important opportunity to contribute to this aspect of the Board's vision. The librarians at the Eagle Rock branch library recognized a growing need for agricultural education and resources in the County. While typically those education efforts have been mostly focused on 4H and the Future Farmers of America programs in the County, the librarians felt that they could fill a niche in their community. The Eagle Rock branch is located in the most agrarian and rural part of the County, and many of its patrons have direct relationships to the family farms in the area. The library is also a hub for families in the community and has had much success with its children's and teen programming. As a result, the librarians saw a unique opportunity in the County to play a role in promoting agriculture in the community.

### The Program

The Eagle Rock Seed Library operates under a simple premise: it is a library for seeds instead of books. The librarians have collected a number of varieties of rare and heirloom seeds in order to build up a supply of initial resources. These seeds are stored and catalogued, similar to the books on the shelves, with resources highlighting the seeds and best farming and growing practices. Completely free of charge,

patrons can “check out” up to five packets of seeds with instructions to grow at home. The patrons then grow the seeds and plants within certain sets of parameters in order to prevent cross pollination or hybridization of the seeds. As the plants mature and are harvested at the end of the season, patrons collect their seeds in packets supplied by the library. The patrons then return those new seeds to the library in order to maintain the collection. The branch library also holds a plant sale in order to highlight the plants grown through the Seed Library program. Throughout the process, the library provides information and resources on growing and preserving the seeds in a way that will highlight their qualities and preserve their viability for continued use. Lastly, in order to expand the program, the library accepts donations of rare and heirloom seeds for its collections.

### The Problem

As has been stated, the Board of Supervisors was keenly aware of the need to promote and sustain the County’s agricultural tradition before it was lost. A key component of this has been to find ways to engage young people in ways that expose them to the world of agriculture without the huge burden of investment typically required by larger farming operations. There needed to be something with high visibility and easy access that could bring families and community members to farming. The libraries, already serving as a community hub, became the perfect venue to offer a program that could reach all parts of the community. The Eagle Rock branch library, in particular, was well suited to host the program because of its rural location and heightened community visibility, being one of the only direct local government service providers in its area.

Moreover, a second facet of the program has always been to promote local and diverse food resources. In the age of industrial farming and increasingly processed foods, many people have lost any kind of connection to local produce. In fact, many heirloom varieties and traditional local crops have been lost as a result of mechanization and modernization. A growing response to these trends nationwide has been to find ways to promote local farms and local produce and to preserve the history of the land through

traditional plantings. The idea of a Seed Library focusing on promoting and preserving heirloom and rare seeds has met the spirit of these renewed efforts to grow and eat local.

### Resources and Staffing

The program was fully designed and implemented using existing County staff and resources or donations. There was no upfront cost for initializing the program. The beginning seeds were all donated to the library and the supplies came from existing stock at the library. The section of the branch library housing the Seed Library also received donations. The flooring and paint, valued at approximately \$900, was given by the Friends of the Library. The wood for the shelves, the back wall, and the table were donated and crafted by a local pastor. The wood was reclaimed from an old barn in Eagle Rock. The pastor also donated all of his labor installing the flooring and building the wood pieces. Other pieces of furniture have been donated by patrons and are being sanded and restored for the area. The Friends of the Library also purchased four new sets of children's nonfiction books pertaining to gardening.

As a culmination of the first year of the program, the branch library held its first Annual Plant Sale in May 2019 in collaboration with the Spring Craft Fair. Indoor and outdoor plants were donated by community members that were trimming back their own collections, and vegetable plants started from seeds in the Seed Library were donated as well. The Eagle Rock Elementary School Ecology Club worked with one of Botetourt County's substitute teachers (and President of the Friends group) to plant and cultivate these vegetables from the Seed Library. The event took in nearly \$700, with plants making up about \$350 of the sales. The plants that were left over were kept in the library and we have slowly been selling them. The branch library has taken in another \$125 since the event.

### Results and Next Steps

A growing and harvesting season for the Seed Library runs from April to April. In the inaugural season from April 2018 to April 2019, the Seed Library had 63 checkouts and 32 donations. This is in addition to the success of the plant sale. The librarians are continuing to work to solicit additional

donations in order to maintain the circulating capacity of the library. The community support for the program, as has been demonstrated, is great and growing.

Once all the furniture is finished and the area for the Seed Library is finalized, the branch library will start doing hands-on gardening classes with the patrons. The name of the group will be called “Eagle Rock Sprouts”. Librarians are currently working to gather funds for this project and putting together a curriculum. A local resident will also be focusing her annual Science Camp on gardening this summer. All involved expect continued successes from the Seed Library program and its spinoffs.

### Conclusion

The goals of the program have been exceeded. Patrons are excited to branch out beyond the normal experiences offered by the library and have an opportunity to learn about and actually provide local produce. In its first year, the Eagle Rock Seed Library has become one of the marquee offerings of the Botetourt County Libraries system. Patrons of all ages are coming together to learn about the history of their food and about sustainable practices that will help ensure that agricultural traditions are maintained for years to come, fulfilling the Board’s vision of a prosperous and diverse agricultural community.

# Eagle Rock Seed Library



## Returning (continued)

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- Your seeds were properly dried and correctly labeled
- You include enough seeds (we request at least 20 for varieties with large seeds) for future patrons to grow a successful crop
- You include any information that may help future patrons successfully grow their seeds
- You log your return in the Seed Library log book.

Thank you for your participation.

Please feel free to contribute additional heirloom seeds to help us grow our collection!



## Gardening resources and sponsors

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- Check out our selection of gardening books!
- Seed Saver's Exchange:  
[seedsavers.org/learn](http://seedsavers.org/learn)
- VA Cooperative Extension Guide:  
[www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs\\_ext\\_vt\\_edu/426/426-316/426-316\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/426/426-316/426-316_pdf.pdf)
- Organic Seed Alliance:  
[seedalliance.org/publications/seed-saving-guide-gardeners-farmers/](http://seedalliance.org/publications/seed-saving-guide-gardeners-farmers/)



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# Seed Library

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## Eagle Rock Library

55 Eagles Nest Drive

Eagle Rock, VA 24085

Phone: (540) 928-2800

Web: [fbursey.wixsite.com/eaglerocklib](http://fbursey.wixsite.com/eaglerocklib)

### Hours of Operation:

Monday - Thursday 9 am - 7 pm

Friday: 9 am - 5 pm

Saturday: 9 am - 1 pm





## What is a Seed Library?

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The Eagle Rock Seed Library is a collection of heirloom seeds available to patrons to promote the growing and saving of heirloom flowers, herbs, and vegetables.

Seed libraries:

- Highlight and preserve rare and heirloom varieties
- Foster diversity in our food system
- Provide an opportunity for hands-on agricultural education
- Encourage healthy communities by promoting outdoor activity and the consumption of fresh, local produce.

## Borrowing

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You may borrow up to 5 packets of seed, free of charge. A seed library works much like a traditional library: the seeds that you borrow now can be “returned” at the end of the growing season after you properly save the seeds from your successful harvest.

Here's how to get started:

- Select up to 5 packets of seeds
- Enter your information into our Seed Library log to help us keep track of interest, use, and returns to the program
- Leave your e-mail address if you would like to be notified about any gardening programs offered by Botetourt County Libraries
- Be sure to take a copy of our seed-saving guide to ensure that you grow and save your seeds properly.

## Returning

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At the end of the season, pick up some empty seed packets from the library to save your seeds. Please fill-out the required information on the packets to help future gardeners grow their seeds successfully. After you have properly saved and labeled your seeds, return them to the library to continue the growing cycle!

Please be certain that:

- The plants from which you are saving seeds were not diseased
- The plants from which you are saving seeds were properly isolated to prevent cross-pollination with other varieties
- Your seed crop was fully mature to ensure viable seeds
- You did not save seeds from hybrid plants

**Continued on back**

# Seed Library



# Log Book

Give. Love. Grow. Bloom.

## How to Participate:

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## Here's how to get started:

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- Enter your information into our Seed Library Log to help us keep track of interest, use, and returns to the program.
- Leave your e-mail address if you would like to be notified about any gardening programs offered by Botetourt County Libraries.
- Be sure to take a copy of our seed-saving guide to ensure that you grow and save your seeds properly.

# Eagle Rock Seed Library



Give. Love. Grow. Bloom.

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**B O T E T O U R T**  
COUNTY OF VIRGINIA

## Botetourt County Library

Administrative Offices

28 Avery Road

Roanoke, Virginia 24012

Phone: (540) 977-3433

Fax: (540) 977-2407

### NEWS RELEASE

**For immediate release:** June 4, 2018

**Contact:** Cody Sexton, Assistant to the County Administrator  
(540) 928-2010

#### ***Botetourt County Libraries Announce New Seed Library***

*Fincastle, VA* — The Eagle Rock Library in Botetourt County has created a new seed library program to encourage patrons to learn about agriculture by growing their own plants with seeds provided by the library. The library provides a collection of heirloom seeds available to patrons to help highlight those rare varieties and encourage the consumption of local produce. This seed library is only the second such offering in the Roanoke Valley and began lending at the end of April.

“We strive to promote a wide variety of experiences at the library beyond the traditional book lending opportunities,” said Eagle Rock Branch Librarian Jaime Duvall. “The seed library will provide an opportunity for hands-on agricultural education, promoting outdoor activities, and fostering diversity in our food system.”

The Eagle Rock seed library works much like a traditional library. Free of charge, patrons may borrow up to five packets of seeds to grow at home. Seeds from the plantings are then returned at the end of the growing season in order to replenish the library for the next season. The library also provides packets to return the seeds and information regarding the proper growing of the plants and preserving of the seeds. The library also accepts donations of heirloom seeds to expand the offerings of the program.

“Botetourt County has a rich agricultural heritage, and the Board of Supervisors identified the promotion of agriculture as a key part of its strategic plan,” said Director of Libraries Steve Vest. “The seed library is an innovative way that the Libraries can contribute to the County’s broader community goals.”

Full details of the seed library’s lending program are available at the Eagle Rock Library during regular business hours. Inquiries about new donations of heirloom and rare seeds should be directed to Branch Librarian Jaime Duvall.

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