

# SEEDS' Spring Plant Festival inspires renewal

## Nonprofit organization celebrates the season and offers food plants for sale

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I think there is a kind of energy in the world that is always ebbing, like a wave that washes onto a beach and clears the sand before drawing back, pausing, and then repeating.

The Spring Plant Festival, hosted by SEEDS on Saturday morning, was like one of these waves over my life. The day before, I found out my grandmother was diagnosed with lung cancer. She is around 80 years old and has been a chain-smoker since before I was born, so it was not a surprise, though the lack thereof didn't stop me from crying on my way to cover the festival.

### A need to be human

I gave myself a pep talk in the car, telling myself to be normal. Engage. But I've always struggled with covering stories in an objective, reporting mindset. How do you dig your hands into the heart of something and then leave to write it down in a series of quotes, facts, etc.? It's always been hard for me to follow the inverted triangle model for writing a story.

So, instead, I tried to be human. I showed up to the Spring Plant Festival at 10 a.m. wearing my "Durm" shirt. Another person showed up five minutes later wearing the same shirt, and we laughed about it.

### SEEDS' first-time events

There was safety fencing all around the SEEDS headquarters, which is located at 706 Gilbert St. The place looked uprooted but established at the same time. Though it had existed for 20 years, this year was the first time SEEDS held the Spring Plant Festival.

I asked Hilary Nichols, the garden manager of three years, if the festival was a sign of things changing for SEEDS, but she said she wasn't sure. She told me that, prior to the festival, SEEDS had been in the habit of selling their food plants on a more regular basis, which had been a lot of work to juggle with everything else that was going on. So last year, SEEDS began planning two bigger events: the Garden Hat Festival that happened last fall and the Spring Plant Festival to celebrate the season.



**Karimah Abdusamad, right, gives Malcolm Goff some pointers on getting his garden started. The food plants available for purchase included cucumbers, tomatoes and more. (Staff photo by Jennifer Tietnguyen)**

### SEEDS' mission statement

SEEDS teaches respect for life, for the earth and for each other through gardening and growing food.

For a moment, I thought Hilary said "Garden Hap Festival," as in, "what's happening?" Hilary and Jody White, the development and outreach coordinator for SEEDS, laughed and said that would be a good idea. We talked about SEEDS "making food happen" and their intention behind the selection of plants for sale at the event.

There was a variety of food plants like cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers, but also "beneficial insect-attractant plants" for the more seasoned gardeners like Karimah Abdusamad, a frequent SEEDS supporter who said she was looking for plants that attract bees and butterflies. She was accompanied by her coworker, Malcolm Golf, who

accidentally grew squash last year and wanted to intentionally grow more food plants this year.

Hilary told me that some of the plants were grown from SEEDS' garden, some came from nurseries and some were divided from plants in the community garden – "kinda like a pass along plant idea."

Aisha Sanders, the president of the community garden, was there to show her support. She bought two plants for her own garden and led me around the grounds, pointing out spots of renovation and showing me the hothouse.

### Bringing back awareness

I met a lot of great people at the festival, and that is why I say it was like a wave over my life. This isn't your typical news story because I don't think it would've been best to tell it that way. But – formulas aside – in the end, going to this event helped bring my life back in check. It was a sunny, beautiful day, and everyone was kind.

It was an event where you could really feel the community presence.