

from
**Collection to
Cultivation**



Project Updates / Summer 2023

With summer finally here, we're excited to share the past six months of activity at the From Collection to Cultivation project. We've been busy with workshops, special issues, edited volumes, and more. You can keep track of the project's activities, past and present, by visiting our website at www.cultivation.hps.cam.ac.uk.

Special issue takes shape: "The History of Crop Science and the Future of Food"

Following the project's successful three-panel contribution to the [Agricultural History Society's 2022 conference](#) in Stavanger, Norway, project PI [Helen Anne Curry](#) and past postdoctoral fellow [Ryan Nehring](#) have organised the contributed papers plus additional invited research into a special issue of the Open Access interdisciplinary journal *Plants, People, Planet*. A further [Call For Papers](#) launched in December 2022 and contributions to the issue are now in the peer review pipeline.

The very first article for the Special Issue to make it through review is already up on Early View: Michele Sollai, '[The Fascist Green Revolution](#)'. Stay tuned for more contributions in the coming months, and assembled for the fully assembled issue to be announced in late 2023 or early 2024.



Seed accessions discussed by Susannah Chapman in her May 22 talk.

Project hosts visiting scholars

In May and June 2023, From Collection to Cultivation hosted two visiting scholars with expertise important to the project. [Dr Xan Chacko](#) arrived from Brown University and is preparing a book manuscript on the history and practices of seed banking, a part of which was workshopped with the team. [Dr Susannah Chapman](#) from the University of Queensland is preparing a book manuscript on seed development and governance in The Gambia. Dr. Chapman delivered a seminar on "[Disciplining the Seed: Local Practice and Agricultural Governance in The Gambia](#)" to the team and larger Cambridge community in May.



A lively discussion at the Monocultures Meets Crop Diversity Workshop, held 18 May

Monocultures Meets Crop Diversity

In May, the research team of From Collection to Cultivation welcomed the research team of [The Making of Monoculture: A Global History](#) (MaMoGH) to Cambridge HPS for a one-day workshop. Led by [Professor Frank Uekötter](#) and based at the University of Birmingham and Ruhr University Bochum, the MaMoGH team is exploring the (il)logic of monocultures with a historical lens—a perfect complement to the questions about crop diversity that ground the work of From Collection to Cultivation.

The research-rich day included presentations by both project PIs and the members of both project teams and covered works-in-progress on everything from the global wine industry to Scottish landrace preservation to Indian eucalyptus plantations to international pest reporting programmes. We also had commentaries from distinguished visitors Xan Chacko, Susannah Chapman, and Joeva Rock.

Blog and News Updates



A historical perspective on the UK's Precision Breeding Bill

Wondering whether and how "precision breeding" serves food security goals in the United Kingdom and beyond? Team member [Hitesh Pant](#) puts that question in historical perspective in [a new article](#) in the Cambridge Journal of Science and Policy.



The history and future of soil conservation

Can agricultural historians help develop a holistic vision of sustainable land use planning?

In a [new analysis](#), team member [Tad Brown](#) and co-author Levi Van Sant suggest that an ambitious but thwarted New Deal soils programs might offer some hope for more effective government land planning in the present.

Latest Publications and Press

Project-Sponsored Research Publications

- Helen Anne Curry, '[Breeding Confusion: Hybrid Seeds and Histories of Agriculture](#)', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 50, no. 3 (2023): 1037-1055.

- Helen Anne Curry, '[Data, Duplication, and Decentralisation: Gene Bank Management in the 1980s and 1990s](#)', 163–182 in Sabina Leonelli and Hugh Williamson, eds., *Towards Responsible Plant Data Linkage: Data Challenges for Agricultural Research and Development* (Cham: Springer, 2023).

Other Publications by Project Affiliates

- Leo Chu, '[Review of *The Globalization of Wheat: A Critical History of the Green Revolution*](#)', H-Sci-Med-Tech (May 2023).

Outreach and Press

- Helen Anne Curry, [webinar on the history of plant science databases](#) for the European Molecular Biology Laboratory, May 2023.
- Hitesh Pant, '[The Profits and Perils of Precision Breeding for Agriculture](#)', *Cambridge Journal of Science Policy*, May 2023.
- Tad Brown (with co-author Levi van Sant), '[Appreciating Poor Soils](#)', *Short Rows*, January 2023.
- Helen Anne Curry, [interview with the New Books Network](#), January 2023.

Recent Conference and Workshop Presentations

Erinn Campbell

- "'Frank and honest'? The politics of international plant pest reporting, 1952–1994', British Society of History of Science Postgraduate Conference, University of Oxford (UK), March.
- "'Frank and honest'? The politics of international plant pest reporting, 1952–1994', Insect Humanities working group, May.
- "'A coquettish, hitchhiking bug": The rise and fall of Pestina, mascot of the United States Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection program', Bugpocalypse Now! workshop, European University Institute, June.

Leo Chu

- 'The Politics of Apolitical Seeds: Crop Science in Cold War Taiwan and Thailand, 1960–89', International Graduate Student Conference on the Cold War, LSE, May.
- 'Between Monoculture and Diversity: Vegetable Breeding in Taiwan and Southeast Asia, 1960–1990', European Association of Taiwan Studies Conference, SOAS London, June.

Zsuzsanna Ihar

- 'Dietary Decline: Key Ingredients in the Depopulation of St. Kilda', Global Food Security coffee break session, Cambridge, March.
- 'Missile Harvest: From Machair to Military Proving Ground', (Post)conflict ecologies workshop, Birkbeck, University of London, April.
- 'Parasitic Climates', Bugpocalypse Now! workshop, European University Institute, June.
- 'Warring Waves, Warring Wheat: On the Material (De)militarisation of the Hebrides', Beyond Bios conference, University of Sydney/Sydney Environment Institute, June.

João Joaquim

- 'Nuancing the physiochemical turn at the Plant Virus Research Station', British Society of History of Science Postgraduate Conference, University of Oxford (UK), March.

Daniela Sclavo

- 'Chiles in Mexico: History, Flavour, and Belonging', Darwin College Humanities and Social Sciences Seminar, June.
- 'El chile en la investigación y conservación de cultivos en México en el siglo XXI: un símbolo al margen', Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, June.

Helen Anne Curry

- 'The Seed Gospel and the Software of the Green Revolution: Agricultural Extension from Iowa to India in the Twentieth Century', keynote address, Southern Forum for Agricultural, Rural, and Environmental History, Mississippi State University, March.
- 'Diversifying Description: Sweet Potato Science and International Agricultural Research after the Green Revolution', American Society for Environmental History Meeting, Boston, March.
- 'Sourcing Seeds: Lessons from History', PHIL_OS conference 'Whither Open Science?' University of Exeter, UK, March.
- 'Narratives of Crisis and Change in the History of Industrial Agriculture', Inaugural Annual Conference of the Committee on Environment, Geography, and Urbanization, University of Chicago, April.
- 'Seed Care in the Making of a Seed Industry', Respecting Seeds workshop, University of Cambridge, June.

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