

# Pebble Garden News

## MUMBAI-PUNE SEED FESTIVALS



### Mumbai Seed Festival, 19-21 February 2012,

Representing the true richness of life, that comes from being one with nature, this group of tribals from Bastar, were the most colourful part of the recent Mumbai seed festival, in which Pebble Garden was actively involved. The Bastar region is home to hundreds of traditional paddy varieties, just as the Jeypore tract of Orissa (undivided Koraput), from where 1745 varieties were reported in 1955-59. Bred by farmers and conserved within farming families for millennia, these stunning varieties have virtually disappeared from the lands and hands that created them replaced by modern cultivars bred by scientists to serve the interests of big industry. Barely 40 years later, the number of traditional rice varieties in Koraput came down to 256 ! What a loss for humanity !

### Pune Seed Festival 22-23 February

The Mumbai seed festival (the first of a series) brought together grassroot seed conservers from different states across India. Fifty endangered vegetable varieties, conserved at Pebble Garden in Auroville, were exhibited, and over 1500 seed packets were offered, all of which found new homes. This festival presented to urban consumers, the immense plant diversity evolved by farmers over the centuries, constituting the food base, upon which our survival rests. Modern varieties, regardless of claims of being 'new' and 'improved' (in the same way as new and improved soaps and detergents) are necessarily derived from ancient ones. Ten thousand years ago humans started developing plants from wild ancestors selecting them for desired qualities. In the past 100 years, despite all the 'advancements' in science, not one single new plant has been domesticated.



### Sahaja Samruddha, Kamataka

farmers conserve and breed paddy, traditional cotton varieties, several varieties of Ragi (finger millet), other millets and vegetables.

### Sarjana, Madhya Pradesh

Astonishing paddy diversity



Sambhav, Nayagarh Orissa 350 paddy varieties !!!



Forest Food from Van Vadi, Maharashtra  
Sorghum from Bastar





Apart from a well-visited exhibition of seeds and books on related subjects, the Festivals included talks, discussions, film shows, presentations and cultural programmes at various venues. (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay Natural History Society, Janata Kendra at Mumbai, and Balgandharva at Pune). It also drew together many committed anti-GM activists, city farmers, environmentalists, writers, artists, film makers, journalists and individuals concerned about the future of food.

The seed conservation work at Pebble Garden was presented through talks and slide shows to different audiences introducing them to the amazing world of farmer-bred Vegetable Diversity. The presentations also pointed out that our current seed legislations, contrary to their titles, protect only patents rather than our seed heritage & farmers rights.



**SEED DECLARATION**

One of the main objectives of the Festival was to express grassroots concerns on government policies and restrictive legislations and come up with a charter of demands. A Seed Declaration was drawn up and signed by the participants. It is up for online signatures at <http://www.change.org/petitions/the-people-and-the-government-of-india-safeguard-agro-biodiversity-for-health-of-people-and-agro-ecosystems-3>

Festival Programme <http://www.qmfreein.org/sf-mum>  
 Festival Facebook site <http://www.facebook.com/events/359748717383521/>

Press Coverage <http://www.rediff.com/business/slide-show/slide-show-1-special-seed-festival-and-indias-food-politics/20120305.htm>

[http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-02-23/pune/31090444\\_1\\_organic-farming-varieties-agro-biodiversity](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-02-23/pune/31090444_1_organic-farming-varieties-agro-biodiversity)

Seeds were sown for a second festival in Kolkata, 27th to 29th April 2012.

The Mumbai seed festival was organised by Jacob Nellithanam, from Chattisgarh, tireless campaigner for farmers rights, Bharat Mansata, writer and long time promoter of organic farming, together with many dedicated individuals and groups. The Festival in Pune was organised by Centre for Environment Education.

