

Swapping FAQs – by Darja Fišer

- What is crop swapping?
 - o A crop swap is an event at which gardeners swap their garden surplus, such as seeds, seedlings, vegetables, fruits, preserves, gardening books, etc.. Crop swapping is a bottom-up movement which is based on volunteer work and community building.
- Can I organize a crop swap?
 - o Anyone can organize a crop swapping event, big or small.
- Are there tips for a successful crop swap?
 - o **PREPARATION:** The organization of a crop swap is simple and doesn't take a lot of time. You don't need any previous experience with organizing events. The organization will be faster, easier and more fun if you ask some friends or fellow gardeners to help you. It's perfectly normal that the first few events are small because gardeners from your neighbourhood or town first need to find out about your events and get used to them, so don't be discouraged by a possible low turnout at first. What's important is that you have taken the most difficult first step, so make sure to fully enjoy the event with the pioneer fellow swappers. If there's something you can't or don't have time to do, ask for help, experience shows that many people are happy to help if you only let them know what you need. Don't complicate things, improvisation is a powerful tool that can take you a long way. The main point of a crop swap is to have a good time with fellow gardeners, not immaculate organization. It is also important to use the first few events for awareness raising and explaining the mission of the crop swapping movement which are surplus exchange, solidarity and socializing. Try to create a friendly, informal and spontaneous atmosphere with as few rules as possible, and let the participants agree on the desired swapping currency. Participants who don't know the event will often ask what they can swap or complain about not having anything to swap. Show them that there's plenty of choices and that almost anyone has some surplus at home. If they're new to gardening and don't have any seeds, plants or crops yet, they can bake a pie or bread, bring home-made jam or pickled cucumbers. They can forage for herbs, mushrooms or chestnuts. They can bring home-dried tea or herbs or even gardening books they no longer need.
 - o **VENUE:** Pick a public venue that your participants know and like. If you meet at a square or in a park, other passers-by will notice you as well. If there's any outdoor furniture already available at the site, this is a plus. Otherwise, ask your participants to bring along a camping table, picnic blanket, or some baskets, crates or boxes. Think about parking options so that participants don't have to carry their gear too far. Given that you will be swapping gardening surplus it might be easiest to meet outdoors so that you don't need to worry about leaky pots, soil, plant debris, etc. Ideally, there's be a covered space available nearby in case of rain. Local parks, schools, community centres, libraries, retirement homes and community gardens are all good potential crop swapping venues. In cooler months, gardener-friendly bars and pubs are a nice alternative as well.
 - o **PUBLICITY:** Word of mouth and local publicity are the most important publicity channels. The local newspaper and radio will be happy to announce your event, so make sure to send them the announcement well in advance. Put up a few posters at the local library, school, farmers market. Internet-savvy gardeners can be easily reached via Facebook, Twitter and gardening forums.
 - o **TIME:** It is important to announce the exact time of the beginning and end of your event so that as many people come at the same time and there is a lot to swap. 2 hours is a good time frame for a crop swap.
- Why swap, not buy and sell?
 - o Crop swapping promotes solidarity, generosity, socializing, self-sufficiency, resiliency and respect of home-grown produce. Anyone can participate in crop swapping, regardless of our social or economic status. This is why we recommend crop swapping events to be money-free and promote swapping or gifting your glut instead.
- What's ethical swapping?
 - o Swapping is based on mutual trust and respect. Swapping currency is agreed upon by the swappers on an individual basis. An ethical crop swapper will respect these guidelines:
 - Money-free. Gardening surplus is swapped or gifted with no monetary remuneration.
 - Fair. The description of goods to swap are objective, true and accurate.
 - High-quality. We only swap what we would be happy to receive ourselves. We avoid swapping perishables, fish, meat, eggs.
 - Careful. We only swap healthy goods and take all the safety and hygiene precautions.
- What can I swap?
 - o seeds
 - o seedlings and cuttings

- home-grown produce (potatoes, tomatoes, apples, ...)
- home-preserved produce (pickled vegetables, jams, dried vegetables, fruit, teas, cakes...)
- foraged produce (chestnuts, rose hips, mushrooms, herbs)
- gardening space
- gardening help (weeding, picking, preserving)
- gardening books (cookbooks, books on medicinal plants)
- packaging for preserving food or growing plants
- gardening equipment
- What can't I swap?
 - dairy products
 - eggs
 - meat

Very useful tips on how to organize a swapping event: <http://www.shareable.net/blog/how-to-start-a-crop-swap>

Zelemenjava: <http://www.zelemenjava.si/crops2swap>

Zelemenjava on Facebook (with lots of pictures, posts in English welcome too):
<https://www.facebook.com/Zelemenjava/>

Zelemenjava on video (not sure if relevant for your audience, most of the videos are in Slovene only):

- Clip from Zelemenjava in Kostanjevica organized by Terra Vera with subtitles in English & some international participants: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7IF7tSsOJs>
- TEDx Talk on Zelemenjava: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvP7syQly8Q>
- Clip from Zelemenjava in Kranj organized by museum Layer with a co-organizer from France: <https://siol.net/dom/vrt-in-okolica/ne-veste-kaj-bi-z-vsjo-zelenjavo-z-vrta-zamenjajte-jo-video-448539>
- In Kostanjevica, organized by Kristina Urbanič: <http://www.retrospektiva-blog.com/2017/05/zelemenjava-2017.html>
- In Šentrupert, organized by Zavod Rožlin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrtxyEXvPNE>
- In Ljubljana, organized by Darja Fišer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sx4nQjOIFK0>
- In Novo mesto, organized by Red Cross: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=da6WTe26wzI>
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