

Mehmet Öztan, Ph.D.

Website: <https://seedkeepers.faculty.wvu.edu/>

Personal website: <https://mehmetoztan.com>

Two Seeds in a Pod Heirloom Seed Company **2013 – Present**
Tallahassee, FL **2024 – Present**
Reedsville, WV **2018 – 2024**
Tampa, FL **2013 – 2018**
Co-Founder / Co-Owner
Website: twoseedsinapod.com

- Built and established an heirloom seed company, introducing more than 150 new agricultural seed varieties to the commercial seed market for small farmers and home gardeners across the U.S. to grow, spurring homestead production, community-supported agriculture, and farmers' markets.
- Farmed in urban and rural settings in Florida and in rural settings in West Virginia for over 13 years and in two very different hardiness zones and under challenging climate conditions.
- Coordinated and led community seed saving workshops and farm tours on the company farm to enhance community-based experiential learning.
- Created the only publicly available comprehensive seed grower's manual to specifically guide beginner-level seed growers and farmers through fundamental operations of commercial seed production.
- Effectively prepared contracts and worked with farmers across the U.S. to produce commercial quality seeds for the company's seed catalog and to fulfill existing seed contracts.
- Served on the Slow Food Ark of Taste Committee for the South.
- Gained 13 years' experience in business management and marketing for an online seed company selling more than 250 commercial seed varieties and other products.

Anatolian Seeds Recovery and Preservation (ANATOHUM) Project **2012 – Present**
Tallahassee, FL **2024 – Present**
Reedsville, WV **2018 – 2024**
Tampa, FL **2012 – 2018**
Founder / Seed Keeper / Farmer / Curator / Public Scholar
Website: twoseedsinapod.com/anatohum-project/

- Spearheaded evaluation and documentation of hundreds of open-pollinated seed varieties from Turkey via ANATOHUM Project, archiving cultural and traditional significance, as well as culinary uses.
- Worked with the USDA plant germplasm system to evaluate a variety of seed accessions for potential commercial production and plant breeding projects.
- Evaluated, documented, and commercially introduced dozens of open-pollinated agricultural crops for yield, flavor, disease tolerance, and adaptability to changing climate conditions in Florida and West Virginia.

- Engaged with regional seed companies and organizations, including Southern Exposure Seed Exchange (VA), Uprising Seeds (WA), The Utopian Seed Project (NC), Avoca Seed (OR), and Sow True Seed (NC), for interregional seed evaluations and preservation studies.
- Collaborated with local farmers and community gardens to test plant performances in variable field settings and growing conditions.
- Partnered with a small restaurant in Safety Harbor, FL, to explore market potential of heirloom seeds within the restaurant kitchen.

**Morgantown Seed Preservation Library, Morgantown, WV
Founder**

2018 – 2024

Coordinated Seedy Talks speaker series with a focus on food security and environmental studies. Organized community engagement events, including community seed swaps that promoted cultural preservation and storytelling for food traditions.

- Developed a technical manual to establish a public seed browsing and checkout system for the use of Morgantown Public Library patrons.
- Worked with West Virginia University Library staff to create an online seed display system for Appalachian seed varieties.

**Edd Program, Environmental & Sustainability Education
Antioch University
Course supervisor**

2023 – 2024

- Supervised doctoral student Florentina Rodriguez for a special topic course that explores the experiences of minoritized seed professionals in American seed industry in Fall 2023.
- Planned to supervise Rodriguez for two special topic courses that will explore the 1) connection between food, seed, and farming as a pathway for cultural preservation, and 2) modern food justice movements that face disproportionate leadership by white affluent political groups in Spring 2024.

**Seed Growers: A Community Space for Seed Industry Professionals 2023 – Present
Co-founder and website administrator**

Website: seedgrowers.org

- Conceptualized and organized an online platform that brings seed professionals together to create a free, publicly available information database on topics related to commercial seed production, American seed industry, community-based seed saving, cultural preservation for seeds and seed justice.

Culturally-Informed Community Seed (CICS) Pledge

2025 – Present

Co-creator

Website: cicspledge.org

- Co-developed the Code of Ethics as an evaluation metric for small seed industry accountability and a market enhancement measure to help consumers identify companies, seed growers and/or farmers committed to equity and increased cultural competency in their seed work.