Twitter Thread by Dr. Elizabeth Sawin

Dr. Elizabeth Sawin
@bethsawin

I am reading seed catalogs in the morning sun. A thread. ■■■■■■■

Seed catalogs are good reading my friends. The best ones are little glimpse into possibilities emerging. Of course there's the possibility of your amazing next season garden. But also the possibility of change in the world.

Especially this is true for the companies with social missions, like worker-owned Johnny's or FEDCO. Both are more than 40 years old, part of the organic movement, the local food movement, and trusted providers of good seed and good advice in the northeast US.

Seed catalogs can be a connection to the past and to the future, especially the ones, like my favorites, that also encourage seed saving by offering open pollinated varieties, and tell the stories of some seeds origins.

They also reflect what's changing in the society. And there's a lot that is inspiring in my morning reading even before you get to the luscious tomatoes or the bright green peas and all the promises of the next growing season.

Women farmers are featured throughout. Both as seed growers and as featured customers. Diverse farms, speciality crops, all sorts of models. When I was a little girl who liked to look at seed catalogs, they didn't look like this. (yes I was *that* kind of little girl)

Then there's stories about communities responding to covid by growing and sharing more food and the ways these social mission seed companies have tried to help.

There are new structures emerging. FEDCO has a little blurb about a project that organized in March, all volunteer, that delivered free seed to 10,000 gardeners at cooperative gardens. Those are connections I expect will last long beyond COVID.

There are signs of growing accountability. FEDCO writes about their Indigenous royalties program. Some of the varieties are marked with a symbol that means they are seeds stewarded by an Indigenous tribe. A % of the price is passed back to the appropriate tribe.

That's not a panacea and there maybe further to go, but it feels like a start.

In FEDCO there's a note from a reader suggesting that the General Lee cucumber be renamed after someone who isn't a white supremacist icon. The company's response: we are looking for a new variety with the same properties to replace this one. Confederate cucumbers are falling

I know covid is raging and democracy is under attack and the climate is changing and these seed companies are probably not perfect either. But we shouldn't loose sight. People are trying. Experiments are happening. Connections are forging.

Seeds both literal and figurative are sprouting.

Seed catalogs may not be your thing. But I'm willing to bet, whatever your thing is, below the surface or out in plain sight, there are new models being tried out, hard history being looked at, and baby steps being taken.

Each and everyone one of those is place that could probably use your dollars, your excitement, your time. Knitters for racial equity. Romance novelists for environmental justice. Bakers for food sovereignty. I don't know where but I trust it's out there.

Well there's my Sunday morning thoughts, for whatever they are worth. Time for a fresh cup of tea and to narrow down this list of cantaloupe varieties. ■■■■■