



**“All human life depends on plants. Without them we wouldn't be here..All plants are under threat”**

Jonathan Drori

*There's a plan therefore, called The Millennium Seed Bank Project, to save seeds by collecting seeds from 24,000 species of plants by 2010, representing 10% of the world's dryland flora. This was achieved in October 2009. The Bank is an international conservation project coordinated by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. And was launched in the year 2000 and housed in the Wellcome Trust Millennium Building situated in the grounds of Wakehurst Place, West Sussex. Like the Svalbard Global Seed Vault its purpose is to provide an "insurance policy" against the extinction of plants in the wild by storing seeds for future use. The storage facilities consist of large underground frozen vaults preserving the world's largest collection of seeds.*

The project had been started by Dr Peter Thompson and run by Paul Smith and acts as a focal point for research in this area. In collaboration with other biodiversity projects around the world expeditions are sent to collect seeds from dryland plants. Where possible, collections are kept in the country of origin with duplicates being sent to the Millennium Seed Bank Project for storage.

Major partnerships exist on all the continents, enabling the countries involved to meet international objectives such as the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation and the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations Environment Programme. Partnerships exist in Australia, Mexico, Chile, Kenya, China, USA, Jordan, Mali, Malawi, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, Botswana, Tanzania, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and South Africa. **Australia is particularly significant as its flora constitutes 15% of the world's total of species, with 22% of them identified as under threat of extinction.**

When the seeds arrive they need to be cleaned and their identification confirmed. They are then dried, repackaged and stored in sub-zero conditions. When seeds required for research are used up, and to check the viability and storage conditions, seeds are germinated on a periodic basis, typically every 10 years. Plants from stored seeds are also grown where viability in the wild has fallen to low levels, and the resultant seeds are distributed where needed. All seeds provided to institutions are on a non-profit mutual benefit basis.

In April 2007, it banked its billionth seed, the *Oxytenanthera abyssinica*, a type of African bamboo. In October 2009, it reached its 10% goal of banking all the world's wild plant species by adding *Musa itinerans*, a wild banana, to its seed vault.

**Farming Secrets says: Inspiring work by countries unites in a common cause**

Ref: Inspired by a Ted talk which can be viewed in full at: [farmingsecretsblog.com](http://farmingsecretsblog.com)