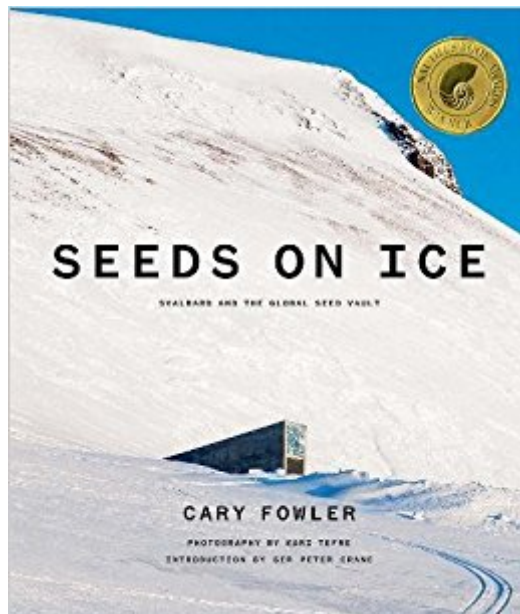




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# Seeds On Ice: Svalbard And The Global Seed Vault



## Synopsis

The remarkable story of the Global Seed Vault<sup>®</sup> and the valiant effort to save the past and the future of agriculture. Closer to the North Pole than to the Arctic Circle, on an island in a remote Norwegian archipelago, lies a vast global seed bank buried within a frozen mountain. At the end of a 130-meter long tunnel chiseled out of solid stone is a room filled with humanity's precious treasure, the largest and most diverse seed collection ever assembled: more than a half billion seeds containing the world's most prized crops, a safeguard against catastrophic starvation. The Global Seed Vault, a visionary model of international collaboration, is the brainchild of Cary Fowler, renowned scientist, conservationist, and biodiversity advocate. In *SEEDS ON ICE*, Fowler tells for the first time the comprehensive inside story of how the "doomsday seed vault" came to be, while the breathtaking photographs offer a stunning guided tour not only of the private vault, but of the windswept beauty and majesty of Svalbard and the enchanting community of people in Longyearbyen. With growing evidence that unchecked climate change will seriously undermine food production and threaten the diversity of crops around the world, *SEEDS ON ICE* offers a personal and passionate reminder that we shouldn't take our reliance on the world of plants for granted; and that, in a very real sense, the future of the human race rides on this frozen and indispensable biodiversity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Like the crystalline, fiber-optic sculpture at its portal, the vault is a beacon of optimism and comity in a world that may seem cold and dark. It is a gift to the entire human family for generations to come.

Santa, an Arctic neighbor, no doubt would approve."#151;Adrian Higgins, Washington Post"[Seeds on Ice] reads like a cross between a coffee-table title and a TED talk. . . . Because the Global Seed Vault isn't open to the public, Fowler's book is the only view of it most of us will ever get#151;which is why the coffee-table book format actually works. So as Fowler catalogs the history of agriculture, the long road of crop diversification and, more recently, of how many varieties have already been lost, we get stunning photography to keep us turning the pages. . . . If the pictures of polar bears and collapsing ice shelves aren't message enough of the timeliness of both the project and the book, Fowler also notes that the Global Seed Vault has already proved its worth. The first seed withdrawal came in 2015, when deposits that had been made from a gene bank in Syria were sent back to help re-establish the banks in the region."#151;The Los Angeles Times#147;If you're already familiar with the Global Seed Vault and understand the crucial role it might play in the future of humanity, you can think of Cary Fowler's new book as a beautiful coffee-table ornament#151;with the bonus of lots of informative, readable text. If you've never heard of the vault, *Seeds on Ice: Svalbard and the Global Seed Vault* can be your introduction to an extraordinary, farsighted venture. . . . Besides the science involved in selecting and preserving seeds, [Fowler] gives a fascinating account of the creation of the vault itself. . . . The book is illustrated with hundreds of photographs of the vault and the stunning Arctic environment in which it's located. • #151;Washington Post#147;*Seeds on Ice* is a marvel of great story with beautiful pictures illustrating the wilderness of the Norwegian mountain hosting the frozen seeds. But, above all, *Seeds on Ice* is a monument to [Cary Fowler's] passionate love for traditional farming and seeds. . . . [He is] telling a passionate story that seeds are life, warning us to wake up and defend unmodified seeds and traditional farming, which are the bedrock of life and civilization. • #151;Huffington Post"Fowler's seed collection may have a reputation as a 'doomsday vault,' designed to save us from apocalyptic natural disaster and nuclear war, but his book is far from a harbinger of doom and gloom. Rather, it serves as a thoughtful treatise on our debt to the world of plants, and our responsibility for their stewardship. It also offers a straightforward recounting of Fowler's vision-turned-reality and, with plenty of stunning photography depicting frigid Svalbard and its surrounding polar bears and glacial shelves, makes for a beautiful addition to any coffee table." #151;Sierra Magazine"Fowler, a key player in the banklike facility's creation, uses stunning images of the site and its surrounding landscape as a springboard into bigger-picture issues. . . . [A] fascinating look at a place few of us would otherwise visit."#151;Discover"[Seeds on Ice] opens the door not only to the Vault, but to a process that shows Norwegian leadership and international cooperation at its best. Beautifully accompanied by

photographers Mari Tefre and Jim Richardson's northern images, this book is a tribute to the Seed Vault, its unique history, and the nature and people of Svalbard. Read this book, and you will know why this is the most important bank vault of all."#151;High North News"The Global Seed Vault is an extraordinary project, and Seeds on Ice is an extraordinary book--in equal measure fascinating, beautiful, and haunting."--Elizabeth Kolbert, author of *The Sixth Extinction*#147;The story of Svalbard's seed vault reads as an amazingly optimistic science fiction story#151;but these remarkable photos remind us, happily, that's it true. For those of us struggling to keep the planet from cracking, it's a great comfort to know all about this project.#151;Bill McKibben, author of *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*#147;I'd like to think that the future of cuisine is decided at the dinner table, but really, it begins with what you see here, and the recipes that are written for our food long before they reach the kitchen. Seeds on Ice introduces readers to our most precious culinary resource#151;the Svalbard Global Seed Vault#151;and our most urgent challenge as eaters: protecting crop diversity for the future of food.#151;Dan Barber, author of *The Third Plate*#147;This book is so stunning and Cary Fowler's work at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault is so important#151;it's a book that everyone who loves our planet should own.#151;Bette Midler#147;Here is an adventure story and an amazing success story of one man's personal, professional, and passionate crusade for the conservation of genetic diversity in the world's agricultural crops. Visionary thinking, conservation action, and international cooperation have resulted in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, promising a better future for biodiversity in agriculture. The same combination of vision, action, and cooperation will be required to provide a better future for biodiversity among wild plants and animals.#151;Gregory Long, President of the New York Botanical Garden

Cary Fowler served as the Executive Director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust from 2005 to 2012. The trust's mandate is to ensure "the conservation and availability of crop diversity for food security worldwide."Fowler was influential in the creation of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault.Fowler has received several honorary degrees, including an Honorary Doctorate of Law degree from Simon Fraser University, and an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities degree from Rhodes College. He received the Right Livelihood Award with Pat Mooney in 1985 for his work in agriculture and the preservation of biodiversity. Fowler has also received the Vavilov Medal from the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences. In 2010, he was one of ten recipients of the 16th Heinz Awards (with special focus on global change). In 2012, he was awarded the "Wind Beneath my Wings" award jointly with his wife Amy P. Goldman at Bette Midler's annual "Hulaween" party. He was the

baccalaureate speaker at the 2013 Rhodes College commencement ceremonies and received the 2015 William L. Brown Award for Excellence in Genetic Resource Conservation from the Missouri Botanical Garden. Sir Peter Crane is currently the dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. He is the former Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, London. He is a fellow of the Royal Society, a foreign associate of the United States National Academy of Sciences and a foreign member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences since 2002. He was awarded a knighthood on 12 June 2004. Marie Tefre is a Norwegian photographer best known for her work on XLTV (1998), Seeds of Time (2013) and Seed Warriors (2010). In 2003 she moved to Svalbard to work with culture productions and children in the world's northernmost community, Longyearbyen. She started capturing scenes of the Svalbard nature, society and wildlife. She provided international media with spectacular footage and tv-material from the Arctic in the period 2004 - 2013. Now she is back in Oslo, working with event production at NRK Aktivum. Jim Richardson is a photographer for National Geographic Magazine and a contributing editor for its sister publication, TRAVELER Magazine. Richardson has photographed more than 30 stories for National Geographic. Richardson's work takes him around the world, from the tops of volcanic peaks to below the surface of swamps and wetlands. ABC News Nightline produced a story about the long process of assembling a National Geographic coverage by following Richardson in the field and at National Geographic Society headquarters in Washington, D.C.

This was a gift that was very well received by a bee-keeper/farmer who has interests in all things concerning our planet and her preservation.

Especially interesting book not only on the world seed bank but on Svalbard itself.

Seeds On Ice takes most readers to a place they've likely never been (Svalbard, Norway) and to another place they've definitely not been: a seed vault carved deep into Norway's permafrost. Cary Fowler's beautifully photographed and designed book chronicles the remarkable feat of inspiration and engineering behind the seed vault. Something like the planet's appendix, it's a repository of many of the invaluable things the earth needs to reboot parts of itself after a disaster like a war, flood, fire, or earthquake: seeds that supply the world's residents with the food that keeps them alive and their traditions alive. Seeds from plants native to each nation are deposited in

Svalbard and safely stored until they're needed; a "just in case" collection that has already proven its necessity: The fighting and devastation in Syria have already prompted the vault's first withdrawal, an emergency return of seeds needed to regrow essentials like wheat, barley, chickpeas, and beans. This fascinating and important book is also a pleasure to read, with Mr. Fowler's scholarship translated into accessible and engaging prose. Of all the images in the book, the most enduring for me was a local woman pushing a baby carriage with a rifle strapped across her back "necessary protection from the very real threat of a polar bear attack. I think our seeds are safe in Svalbard!

I have been interested in the story of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault ever since hearing of the project, and was very pleased one of the original project leaders published a book on the subject. I was not disappointed. The book is very compelling as a coffee table staple "the photography is that good. And the extra heavy paper used in the hardcover edition aids in bringing a quality feel to the volume (though the sub-sized book jacket felt out of place to the book itself). But rest assured, this book isn't just about good looks " it has substance, too! I enjoyed the Cary's review of the history of the area, bringing the reader to appreciate the sense of pride and duty the community has in being the custodians of such an important facility. The journey from inception of the idea of a global seed vault to its completion also held my interest " somehow transposing the dullness inherent in the bureaucracy of any large project into a triumph for science and common sense. Cary tells the tale in a compelling manner, and as he states, the project's success certainly appears to have hinged on all of the individual's collective efforts being aligned. In documenting the events, I very much suspect Cary minimized the important role he played in that process. He writes with humility and respect. There were a few things I learned about the vault that sort of surprised me. I had always assumed that the vault was overbuilt to some degree " to accommodate future growth. The author even stated that it is unlikely to reach capacity during "his lifetime or that of his children". With that in mind, I thought it odd to learn that the Seed Vault only accepts samples of agriculturally significant crops (with a noted exception of seeds from plants local to Svalbard). That struck me as an odd policy " given the capability to store seeds of plants that may have medical significance in the future. Cary provides a brief rationale for this " but I was left feeling it needed a bit more of an explanation. That's especially true given the amount of storage capacity that is available and idling. Further, the vault is modelled as a "safety deposit box" where the facility simply stores what is sent to it without close interrogation of the contents. Norway's GMO

importation policy also seemed at odds with the mission of the Seed Vault “ it seems an arbitrary restriction that may someday be regretted. But policy is what it is, and this is not a real fault of the book itself. I just felt myself yearning to learn more about these nuances of the Seed Vault’s operation. One other small contradiction caught my eye. Cary makes mention that a number of countries have yet to send deposits to the vault. In the same paragraph, he adds that seeds significant to those same countries are actually being held in the vault “ submitted by other countries. He had previously established that the vault purposefully discourages duplicate seed storage as an obvious waste of space. It would appear plausible that the countries in question simply recognize that their samples are already present in the vault “ albeit sourced by other means. I appreciate Cary’s desire to promote the Seed Vault as a practical symbol of global unity and cooperation, and having these countries participate would be beneficial in that regard, even if not providing additional protection for seeds already being securely stored. I certainly cannot blame Cary for having a bias in this regard. There are also undoubtedly other seeds from the countries in question that are not protected in the vault “ so his position maintains merit. My one quibble about the content itself is that I was looking forward to a floorplan, technical layout, or see-through model of the facility. A very minor shortcoming, as these are readily available on the Internet. But I feel it would have fit well within the construction section. The fact that the book caused me to ask the questions above, as well as write a review, speaks to how well Cary held my interest throughout. The photography is beautiful, and the storytelling is compelling. An easygoing flow takes what could have been a dull technical treatise and turns it into a very worthwhile read. Well done.

If the person who commented about the editorial review credited to the late Jack Harlan had read this remarkable book with more than a modicum of objectivity, he would have noticed that Mr. Harlan’s quote, which also graces the fifth page of *Seeds on Ice*, clearly was published as a tribute to Mr. Harlan and his important work in plant genetics. Cary Fowler has done an amazing job of finding a clear and picturesque way to bring his crusade to conserve the world’s seed supply, thus the Global Seed Vault, into our homes so we can learn about and share in his passion for genetic diversity. Excellent book!

By now most of us have learned that before generating resources (time, money, passion, etc.) to anything, it is essential to unearth and convey both an intellectual and an emotional reason for people to invest. Founded on a solid scientific foundation that recognizes the perils of climate change, the volatility of geopolitics, and the centrality of biodiversity, Cary Fowler’s *Seeds On Ice*

offers a stunning and engaging presentation of an impressive and dramatic solution to a universal problem that potentially affects every living thing on earth. While our society often cannot see beyond the gyrations of political cycles, the seasons of the year or even today's stock market reports, Fowler approaches complex issues with a remarkably long lens - well beyond the seven generations often cited - to tens of thousands of years hence. We all owe him and his colleagues a debt for having the wisdom, insight and forethought to enlist a many of the world's countries in a sizable commitment to a shared future. Fabulous images open the heart. Purposeful prose seals the deal.

Incredibly written. Breath-taking photographs. I'm a teacher and have shared this story with my young students. They were absolutely taken with the Cary Fowler, the seed vault, and Svalbard.

A thoughtful book written by Cary Fowler, who knows the subject better than anyone. Beautiful photographs by Mari Tefre. I highly recommend it.

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