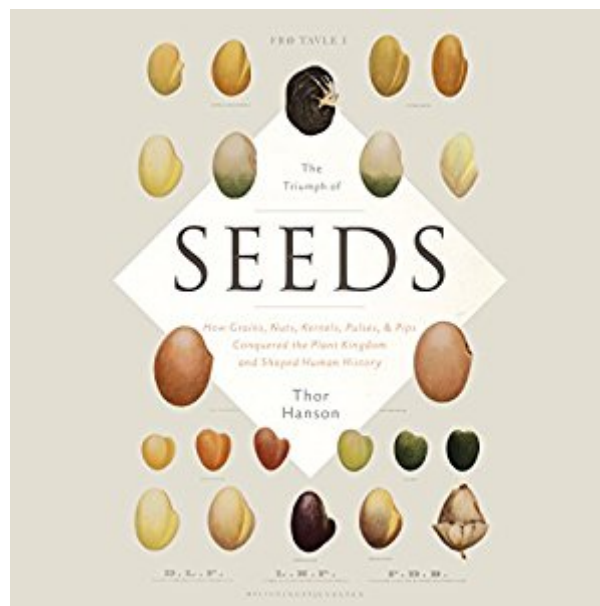


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# The Triumph Of Seeds: How Grains, Nuts, Kernels, Pulses & Pips Conquered The Plant Kingdom And Shaped Human History



## Synopsis

We live in a world of seeds. From our morning toast to the cotton in our clothes, they are quite literally the stuff and staff of life, supporting diets, economies, and civilizations around the globe. Just as the search for nutmeg and the humble peppercorn drove the Age of Discovery, so did coffee beans help fuel the Enlightenment and cottonseed help spark the Industrial Revolution. And from the fall of Rome to the Arab Spring, the fate of nations continues to hinge on the seeds of a Middle Eastern grass known as wheat. In nature and in culture, seeds are fundamental - objects of beauty, evolutionary wonder, and simple fascination. How many times has a child dropped the winged pip of a maple, marveling as it spirals its way down to the ground, or relished the way a gust of wind (or a stout breath) can send a dandelion's feathery flotilla skyward? Yet despite their importance, seeds are often seen as a commonplace, their extraordinary natural and human histories overlooked. Thanks to Thor Hanson and this stunning new book, they can be overlooked no more.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I enjoyed this book. Author Thor Hanson brings a lot of interesting personal detail and a good sense of humor to his discussion of seeds. The science is very clear and accessible. The writing is conversational in tone and I felt that I was getting to know Hanson. It was actually hard to put the book down and I only have a passing interest in botany and I do not garden. Although I also liked Jonathan Silvertown's *An Orchard Invisible*, which I rated as four stars, I felt that Hanson's effort was slightly more enjoyable. Nonetheless if you are interested in seeds, then either book is a good choice.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading about the continually evolving adventure of seeds. We gain so many products directly from seeds, without any other part of the plant, that it's simpler just to list categories such as food, clothing, biofuel, poison, gum, drinks etc. The book explores the relationship we have had with seeds over the centuries and how our near relatives gorillas still search them out for food. The oldest seed to have survived and sprouted is a date palm seed found at Masada, two thousand years old. The author spent time with various researchers, in forests, farmland, jungles and in a coal mine. Carboniferous plants which we have found are ferns and horsetails; but only the swampy land preserved plants, and on the uplands, paleobotanists now believe, grew conifers producing the earliest true seeds. Chapters are devoted to the chemistry of coffee, of chocolate, of chile pepper. Spices coming along the Silk Road and wheat carrying rat flea larvae played immense parts in history. Tiny seeds blown high in the Himalayas form the basis of a food chain, with fungus digesting them, grazed upon by insects which support spiders. Seeds have been taken off Earth to study their germination in space. And we learn why in the future we'll be growing more sorghum. The book is easy to read for me, but in case you are unsure of words, there is a brief glossary at the end to help. Most terms are explained as the author goes, and there's plenty of interest and contrast. As dip-into reading for any plant lover or ecologist this book could hardly be bettered.

I'm about half-way through this book, and it is wonderful. Interesting mix of science and personal anecdotes. I, too, have read "An Orchard Invisible," which is also informative. I am a botanical artist driven to learn about what I attempt to paint. Nuts and seeds are fascinating to look at and hold - so many shapes, sizes, colors, textures. Thor Hanson is good at describing what is going on inside those seeds, and some of the reasons why they vary. I've got some seed packets left over from last year and will try my hand at attempting to get them to sprout. I think I will read Thor's other books as well.

New York Society Library This is a charming scientific discussion of seeds and how they came to be the "best" way for most plants to carry on the genes to the next generation. Hanson writes very clearly, and he includes just enough autobiographical material to make me feel I am wandering through the fields and forests with a good and extremely knowledgeable friend. The librarian suggested I read his *Feathers: The Evolution of a Natural Miracle*. Based on the reviews of that book here on , that is a must read. More anon. Robert C. Ross May 2015

This is a book written by someone whose passion for their corner of the natural world is joyful and infectious. It is a pleasure to read. It is also a fount of information useful to help us thread our way through the risky future of genetically modified food crops even though the author specifically places that whole world outside of consideration for this book. I recommend this book, and if you have youthful family members showing interest in the natural world this book is an excellent doorway into a rewarding world.

Not even done yet because I'm savoring every word, but I must write this review--get this book. Such a brilliantly written book, full of science but accessible to all readers. Stories of how seeds evolved, why they are so varied, how seed banks are going to save them and humanity by safely storing them, what happens inside a dormant seed. Hanson describes the varied dances between seed eaters and plants' defenses which sometimes means some seeds have a tough time germinating--and why rats can chew through concrete. I adore this book.

Very well written. Botanical narrative is smooth and interesting. Thor Hanson reveals interesting insights into the evolution and development of seeds. He uses clear examples to demonstrate principles which result in the amazing powerhouse which is the modern seed. Excellent read.

I really liked this book, especially the Javan cucumber seed. Lots of seed insight is presented. Seed mysteries are only partially revealed, since like all living things, there is a lot we still don't understand.

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