



FALL
2021

Zoe-Blue Coates | Emily Thiessen | Dre Searle

BIODIVERSITY VOLUME 3

SEED SAVERS

This project was made possible through collaboration with the Compost Education Centre and with funding from the City of Victoria's Everyday Creativity Grant



KEY TERMS

Ecological Stewards People who care for lands and waters with respect and reciprocity for other living beings.

Heirloom variety A plant grown from seeds that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Turtle Island A term for North America.

Enslaver A person who owns another person.

Resilient A person or thing that can become strong and healthy again after something bad happens.

Polyculture Growing different types of plants in the same space at the same time.

Crop rotation The practice of changing the location of a crop after each season.

Rainwater Harvesting The practice of gathering rain water for gardening.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

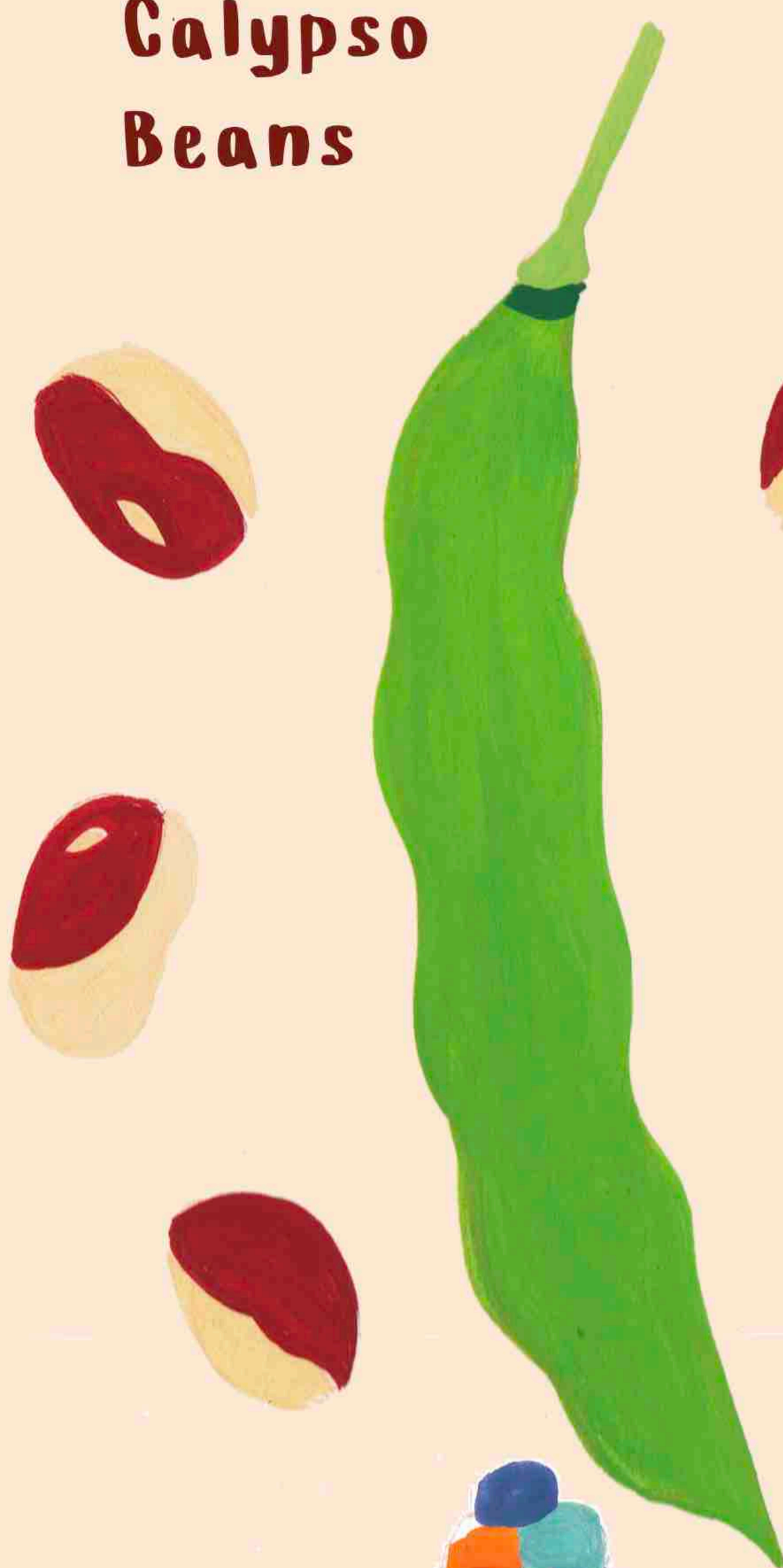
1. List three things you learned from these stories.
2. Why is seed saving important?
3. Is there a fruit, vegetable, or medicine that is important to you or your family?
4. Draw a picture of a seed.
5. How is seed saving ecological stewardship?



DeK

SEED SAVING

Calypso
Beans



A seed is a plant that hasn't started growing yet. Inside a seed is a baby plant, food for the plant and a protective shell. Seed savers gather seeds from the plants they grow and keep them until they are planted again.

Humans have been saving seeds for a very long time. Our ancestors gathered seeds from the plants they grew and taught their children to do the same. These seeds adapted to the conditions that they were grown in.

Seed savers around the world have passed down some seeds for fifty or more years. These old plant varieties are called heirlooms, they nourish us as they nourished our ancestors. Without these seeds, how can we know who we are and where we come from?

Non-heirloom seeds are prone to disease and defenseless when attacked by pests. Heirloom seeds are resilient and grown for specific regions. Heirloom seeds and the people who care for them hold lessons for us. The seeds remind us about our responsibility to the land, because they can show us how to grow food, share that food with others, and pay close attention to weather and changes in climate. The seeds that we grow change with us over time and as we move to different regions around the world. This means that we can continue to eat the same foods as our ancestors no matter where we go and continue to build healthy and resilient communities.

Blue Gem Corn





**BLACK RICE
FARMERS**

Indigenous communities like the Jola people in Senegal have grown West African rice or *Oryza glaberrima* for thousands of years.

In the 1600s, Europeans visited West Africa and were impressed by the rice farms they saw. They chose to kidnap thousands of people and pack them into slave ships to recreate these rice farms on Turtle Island. The enslaved people were not told where they were going or if they would ever return home.

Some West African women braided rice seeds into their hair before they left. They saved and protected these seeds so that they would have food to grow wherever they ended up.

Oryza glaberrima



Enslavers built plantations where West African farmers were forced to work. The rice they grew was as popular and successful as sugar or cotton would later become.

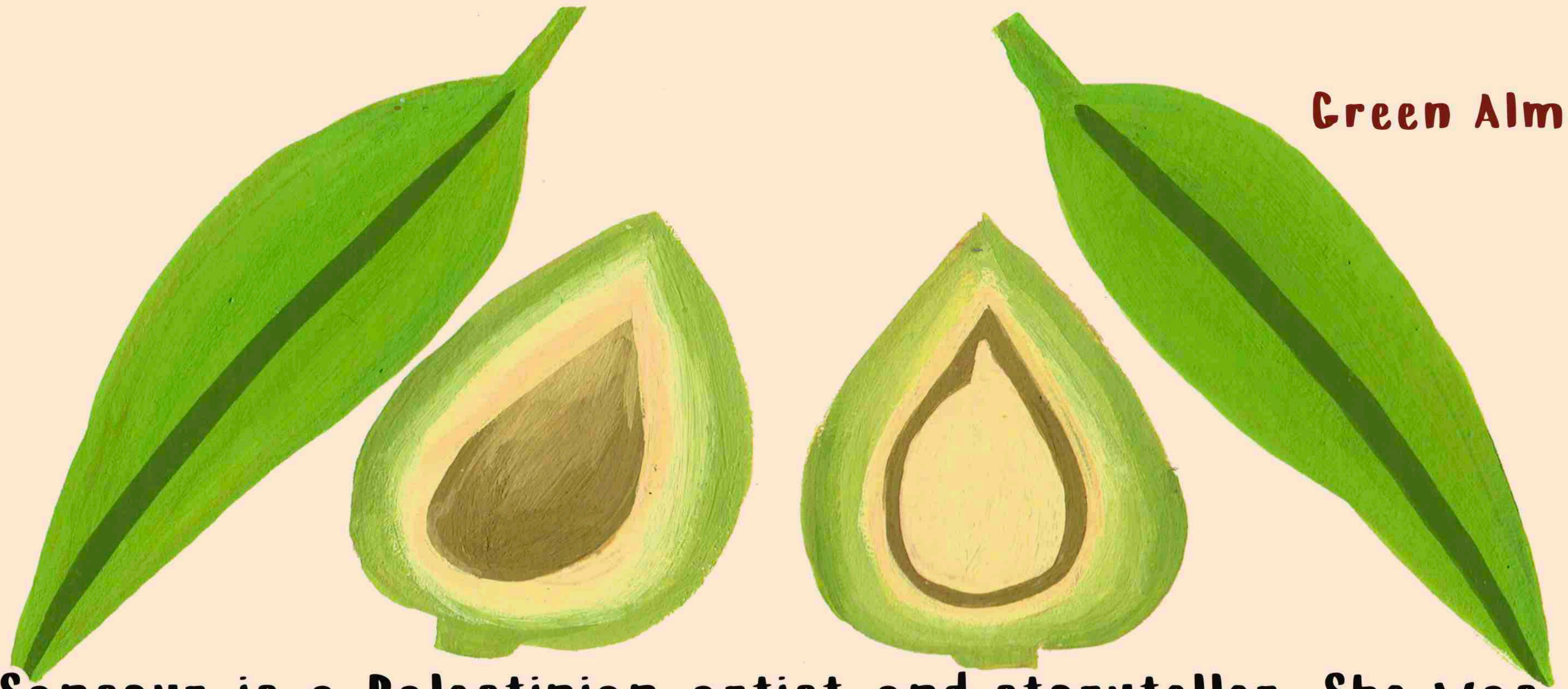
Enslavers sold the rice to communities on Turtle Island and in Europe. These sales made the slave owners and their families rich.

Large-scale plantations would have failed without West African farmers because enslavers stole these communities for their labour and ecological knowledge.

One hundred years after the first rice plantations were created, *Oryza glaberrima* was replaced with an Asian variety called *Oryza sativa*. It was a different type of rice, but Black folks continued to farm, hunt, harvest crops, and live on the same plantations for many generations. Some of these families continue to farm on the same lands as their ancestors to this day.



**VIVIEN
SANSOUR**



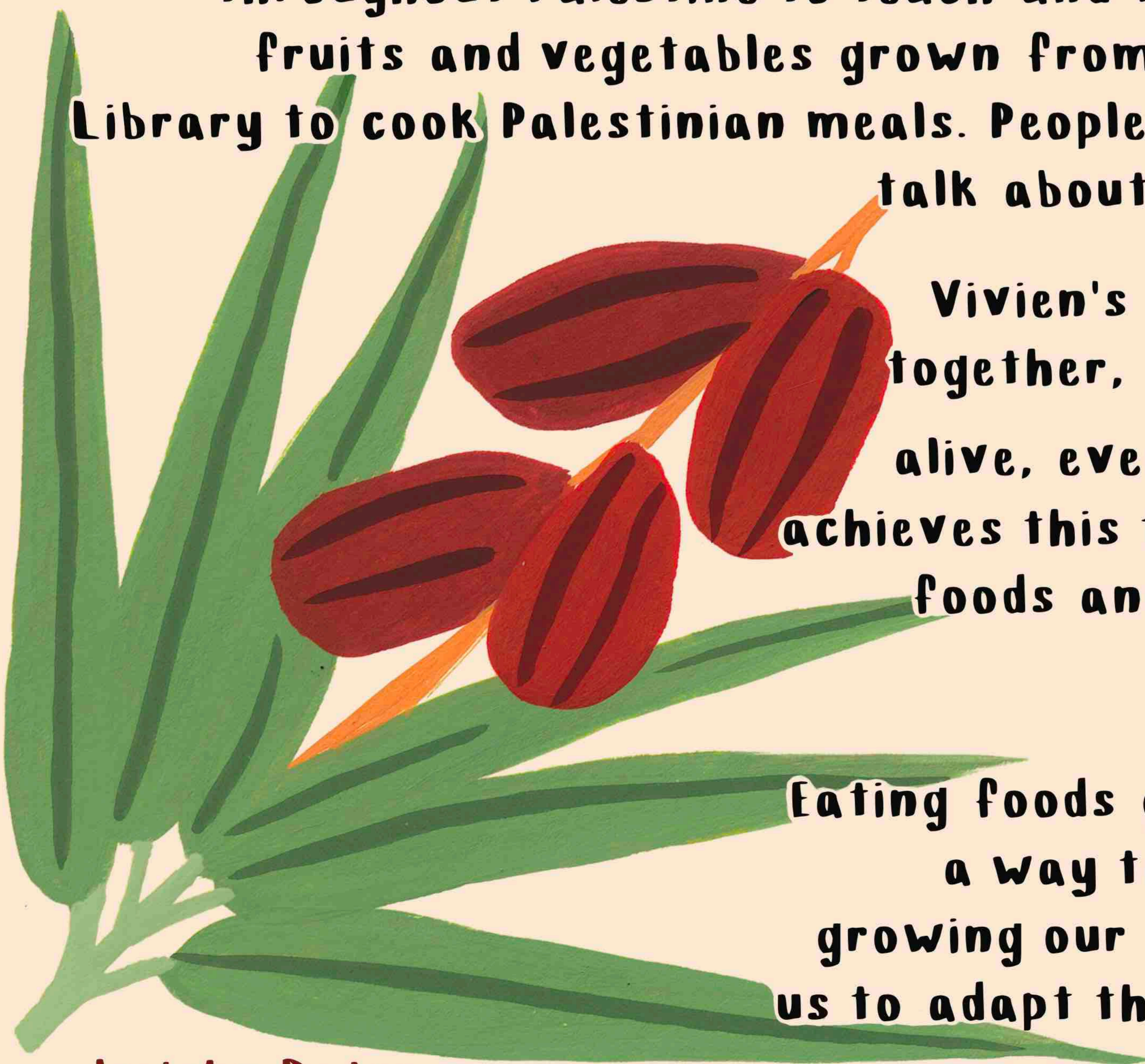
Green Almond

Vivien Sansour is a Palestinian artist and storyteller. She was born in Beit Jala (pronounced: bayt jala), a town close to Bethlehem. Vivien founded the Palestine Heirloom Seed Library and the Travelling Kitchen to uplift Palestinian food traditions. Vivien created the Travelling Kitchen in 2018 to bring people together, share meals, and build community.

Just like George Washington Carver's Jessup Agricultural Wagon (read BioDiversity #1), the Travelling Kitchen goes to communities throughout Palestine to teach and learn from them. Vivien uses fruits and vegetables grown from the Palestine Heirloom Seed Library to cook Palestinian meals. People gather to share a meal and talk about Palestinian food traditions.

Vivien's projects aim to bring people together, and keep Palestinian culture alive, ever-changing and thriving. She achieves this through learning about their foods and teaching others what she's learned.

Eating foods grown in our communities is a way to keep us strong. Saving and growing our traditional foods allows for us to adapt them in the present and carry them into the future.



Jericho Dates



TRUE LOVE SEEDS

Christopher Bolden-Newsome was born in the Mississippi Delta in the Southern United States, where his family has farmed for many generations. They farmed as enslaved people and continued to farm after slavery ended in 1865. Christopher farms vegetables like Mississippi silver hull crowder peas, white velvet okra, and coral sorghum. These are veggies that Black communities have eaten for many generations

Owen Taylor is Southern Italian and Irish. Like Christopher, he grows foods that are culturally important to his community. These are foods like Dalloway cabbage, San Marzano tomatoes, and Italian frying peppers.

Christopher and Owen are the founders of True Love Seeds, a group of seed savers who farm in the United States. They use traditional farming methods like crop rotation, rainwater harvesting, and polyculture.



White
Velvet
Okra



Italian
Frying
Pepper

When farmers join the group, Owen asks them: what seed tells your story? What seed is connected to your ancestry, to your community work, to your region? These questions show the deep connection each farmer has to the food they grow and the seeds they save. They understand the importance of growing foods that are culturally important to communities.

True Love Seeds shows the power of connecting folks to foods that their families have eaten for generations.

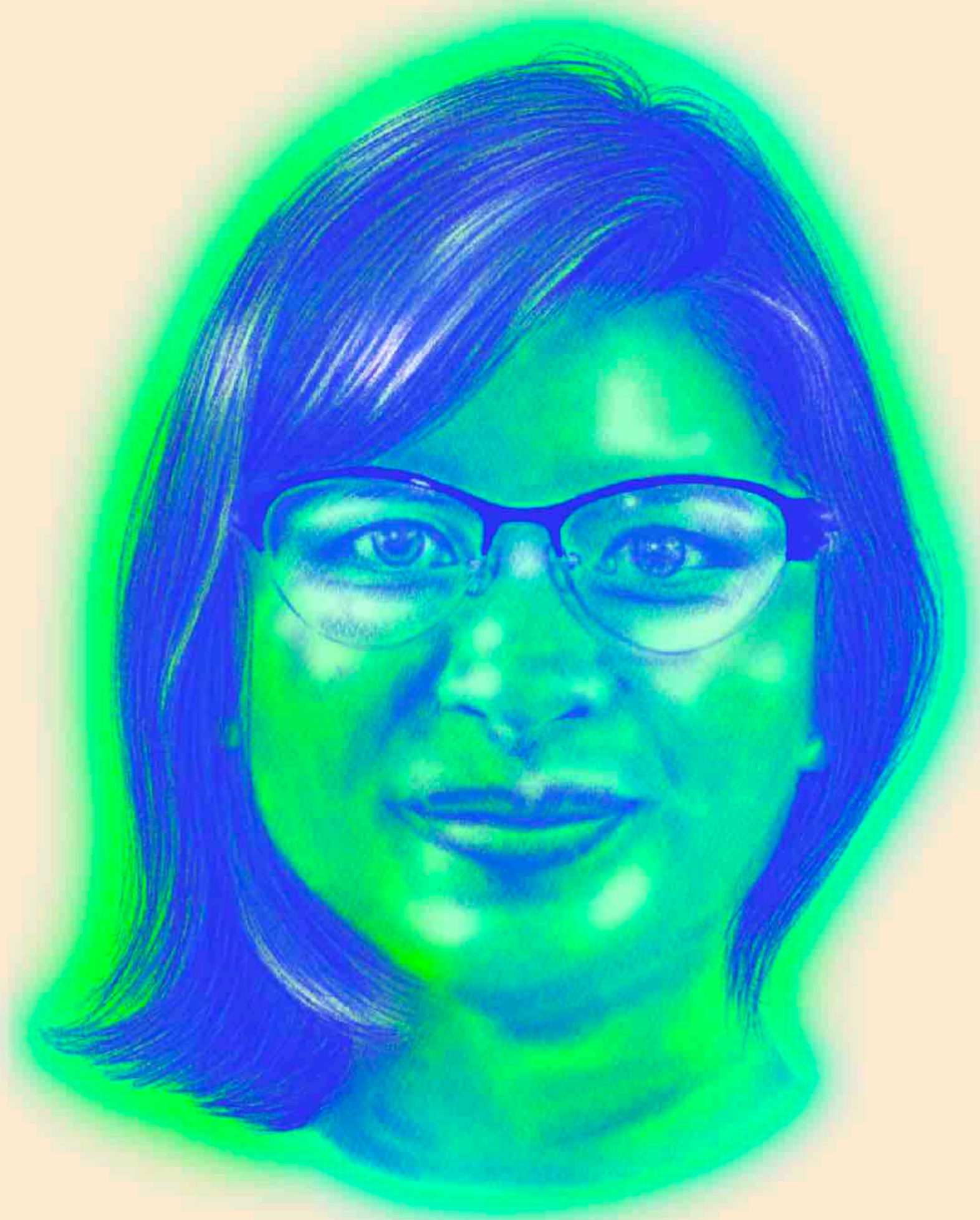
MY ECOLOGICAL STEWARD

Now that you've learned about ecological stewards, we hand the reins over to you. Use the questions below as a guide to write and draw an ecological steward in your life.

1. Who is your ecological steward?
2. What does this person do?
3. What are some of their key beliefs?
4. What is a plant or animal that they work with?
5. Why are they important to you or your community?

We'd love to see your work! Send a picture of your ecological steward to office@compost.bc.ca

My ecological steward is: _____



Emily Thiessen is an illustrator and climate justice organizer who likes creative troublemaking. She comes from Malaysian-Chinese and Mennonite roots and grew up on Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ territories.

Dre Searle is an illustrator based out of Victoria, B.C. She is inspired by comic books, Catholic iconography, Mexican folk art, and vintage fashion.



Zoe-Blue Coates is an African-American and Afro-Caribbean person. She created the BioDiversity zine to promote the rich histories of non-white peoples' connection to the land, waters, and non-human beings. This project was inspired by non-White youth, who she hopes will grow up proud of their ancestors' hard work.



BIODIVERSITY ZINE SERIES

Read them all!

Email office@compost.bc.ca to get your copy

