



www.redsemillas.org

The Seed Guardian Network (Red de Guardianes de Semillas, RGS) is a not for profit, grassroots organization that works for the conservation and use of traditional organic seeds and related knowledge in the Tropical Andes, aiming to build a sustainable future.

We believe that without the culture that supports it, the seed is nothing but an empty receptacle. Thus we research, preserve and promote old & new skills that can help us build a sustainable future, such as nutrition, alternative economics, natural building and appropriate technologies.

RGS is formed by people who work directly with nature, organic production, and local culture. Seed Guardians, as we call them, are heirs to a very ancient culture, living in one of the more important hotspots of agricultural diversity. The incredible genetic and cultural wealth of the Tropical Andes is being lost today at an alarming rate, and thus the Seed Guardians' work is a most needed one.

VOLUNTEERING IN COMUNA TOLA CHICA AND RGS COORDINATION CENTER

Volunteers on this program will work in RGS' Coordination Center and in the indigenous community Tola Chica, in a diversified list of activities.

COMUNA TOLA CHICA

The indigenous community of Tola Chica, in the valley of Tumbaco, has gained national recognition for its intense work in the defense of ecology and sustainable development. Located at only 40 minutes drive from Quito, Tola Chica is working hard to preserve its cultural roots, with projects as the School of Traditional Knowledge, the cultural festivals centered around a millenary sacred tree, reforestation programs, and others. In 2010 the community will finish the building of the new communal house, made with super-adobe, and the beginning of new forestation and building projects.

RGS COORDINATION CENTER

In El Moro Garden, valley of Tumbaco, works the Coordination Team of Red de Guardianes de Semillas (RGS). The team gathers Tuesdays to Fridays in the mornings, in a variety of administrative, coordination and seed processing chores. Volunteers will have the opportunity to learn about horizontal social network management, grassroots organization, seed processing and storage, seed exchange, and workshops organization.

The volunteer will be joining the national coordination team in its daily chores and functions. Help is needed in communication, web management (simple Joomla actualization), workshops management, volunteer programs management, fundraising, image bank, seed processing and cataloging. Job includes occasional trips to RGS centers in coast, highlands and Amazonia. Being part of the coordination team, the volunteer will have free access to workshops he/she has helped organize.

ACTIVITIES:

With the Community

- Tree nursery: collect seeds in the native forest, nursery management chores including seedbeds, plantings, irrigation, etc.
- Reforestation, participating in the community work (mingas)
- Construction: in 2010, finishing the communal house (superadobe), the guardians' house (rammed earth, tapial) and the common toilets (composting toilets) and greywater treatment systems with living filters.
- Planning and participating in the cultural festivals: June and October.

With RGS Coordination Center

- Creation of didactic materials.
- Web maintenance.
- Workshops planning and coordination
- Images bank management
- Seed germination tests

VOLUNTEER PROFILE:

The first requirement for this volunteering program is the will to learn about sustainability, and the respect for local cultures .

At RGS we are very clear that we want a sharing of experiences among equals. So we look for people prepared to listen and learn with humility, understanding deeply the local reality, before giving advice or providing solutions. The solutions must rise from the local reality. Volunteers are important because they can serve as cultural bridges, helping local people to understand the western world.

Volunteers will have the opportunity of experimenting traditional ways of life in different regions of Ecuador. They will be part of daily activities of families and communities.

We value volunteers that establish an exchange of knowledge, which means that meanwhile they learn, they also share things they know or are good for.

Some important characteristics for volunteers are:

- Willing to do hard work in agriculture, carpentry, building or the like. No previous training is needed.
- Willing to awake before dawn, when needed.
- In all places sanitation is complete, but requires a certain adaptation from the volunteer, having wood / cane structures, dry compost toilets, cold water, etc.
- Volunteers must be clean and organized, taking care of their own places and belongings.
- Volunteers are expected to help in cleaning and house chores, cooking, etc.
- We prefer non smokers and people who consume only small quantities of alcohol. Drugs are not allowed.
- We respect gender, political and religious choices, and expect the same from volunteers. Local societies are very traditional, thus we kindly ask an understanding of local realities, before carefully voicing personal opinions, and only during mature discussions.

Volunteers need to be interested in at least one of the following topics:

- Permaculture,
- Agroecology,
- Seed procesing and conservation,
- Fair trade systems,
- Renewable energies,
- Apropiated technologies,
- Animal caring,
- Natural alimentation.

The appropriated age to apply on this program is between 18 and 30 years old.