

**Item:** Press Release  
**Title:** **Clemson University and Park Seed's New Partnership is Out of This World**  
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Tomato seeds and spaceships don't seem like natural partners. But a joint effort involving Clemson University and Park Seed Company is helping undergraduate students explore how NASA's Seeds in Space program brought together that unlikely pair to deliver educational adventures to students around the world.

Clemson University's Creative Inquiry program provides undergraduates with intensive, discovery-oriented approaches to learning. Creative Inquiry emphasizes experiences that will be meaningful to undergraduate students, and that will promote critical thinking skills, ethical judgment, and communication skills, as well as a deep understanding of the methods of scientific and/or humanities research.

Dr. Pamela Mack is associate professor of History and coordinator of Science and Technology in Society at Clemson. When she received an inquiry from Park Seed Company about helping them preserve and share their 139-year history with academic researchers, she immediately recognized this as a great opportunity for a Creative Inquiry team. Because of her interest in the history of the U.S. space program, Dr. Mack determined that Park Seed's unique partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) would make an excellent focal point for the interdisciplinary undergraduate research team.

NASA and Park Seed Company have worked together since 1983, exploring how well seeds perform when exposed to outer space conditions. And they have involved hundreds of thousands of students from across the country and around the world in experimenting with space-exposed seed. So far, three missions are complete, and a fourth mission is active. Right now, 3 million Cinnamon Basil seeds from Park Seed are orbiting the Earth, attached to the International Space Station. Those seeds are scheduled to return this summer for another round of classroom use.

Freshman Tecoya Brantley finds all of this fascinating, and has signed on as the first member of this new Creative Inquiry team. As an Education major, she is interested in instilling a love of science and math in her future pupils. According to Brantley, “How can educators find new, innovative ways to motivate students? The answer is through new technological advances and exciting new experiments. What is more exciting to a child living in a ‘post-Pluto’ world than experimenting with space seeds?” As part of the Creative Inquiry process, she hopes to connect with teachers and students who participated in Seeds in Space back in the 1980s and 1990s to see what effect their involvement had on their education and career choices.

In the fall, Dr. Mack expects to recruit additional team members from diverse disciplines such as Business, Information Technology, Horticulture, and, of course, History. The resulting Creative Inquiry team will be responsible for generating hypotheses and questions, and will have lots of “hands-on” learning activities, including research into NASA reports and articles, analysis of Park Seed Company documents and artifacts, interviews with Park Seed and NASA employees, and communication with teachers and students who participated in earlier missions.

“Eventually,” states Dr. Mack, “we expect to prepare an extensive Web exhibit about the history of the project, hopefully backed up with archival materials scanned and put on the Web for others to use. And I would love for the group to give a presentation about the history of Seeds in Space at the International Association for Science, Technology, and Society annual meeting in Baltimore.”

Park Seed Company’s Director of Special Projects, Claire F. Kuhl, and her colleagues are highly enthused about this joint project. “Seeds in Space was and is an amazing adventure for our company. We are delighted to have our story and these artifacts made available to researchers and space buffs everywhere rather than leave them lying on dusty shelves or stashed in file cabinets,” stated Kuhl. “In time, we envision extending our online corporate archive to include all our vintage catalogs, key corporate documents, and interesting memorabilia. Clemson’s Dr. Kay Wall, Dean of Libraries, and Michael Kohl, Head of Special Collections, have already provided invaluable direction and support. Thanks to them, we can create our archive according to the appropriate best practices and structures needed to make it truly useful for academicians as well as for our own associates.”

Clemson University is a four-year undergraduate/graduate institution located in Clemson, South Carolina. Clemson offers more than 70 undergraduate majors, as well as innovative programs like Creative Inquiry, that enhance students' learning potential and promote both academic excellence and personal growth. Clemson University is consistently rated among the top public universities in the U.S. by publications such as *Time Magazine* and *U.S. News & World Report*.

The Park Seed Company ([www.parkseed.com](http://www.parkseed.com)) has been providing innovative, top-quality gardening products to generations of American gardeners since 1868. Started in George Watt Park's home in Libonia, Pennsylvania, Park Seed Company has grown into one of the oldest, largest, and most beloved family-owned mail-order seed companies in America. Today, the Park Seed family of brands encompasses Park Seed, Wayside Gardens ([www.waysidegardens.com](http://www.waysidegardens.com)), and Park Seed Wholesale. The Park Seed Company national headquarters is located in Greenwood, South Carolina and boasts 9 acres of trial gardens that are open to the public.

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**Photo Cutlines:**

*Brantley and Mack V02:* Clemson's Tecoya Brantley and Dr. Pamela E. Mack enjoy their first sampling of artifacts from Park Seed Company's long-time partnership with NASA, called Seeds in Space.

*LDEF Released V01:* This image from NASA shows the Long Duration Exposure Facility (LDEF) being released from the space shuttle into orbit in 1984. The LDEF carried numerous experiments, including one containing millions of seeds from Park Seed Company. When the seeds returned to Earth after 6 years in space, the seeds were distributed to schools across the USA and around the world for in-class experimentation and observation.

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