



We envision the Greater Southwest as a place where farms and gardens, kitchens and tables, stores and restaurants are brimming with the full diversity of aridlands-adapted heirloom crops; people are keeping the unique seeds and agricultural heritage alive; and the crops, in turn, are nourishing humankind.

Grassroots Flavors of the Desert House Party Kit

Thank you for hosting a house party and bringing the flavors of the desert into your home! A house party is a fast, easy and fun way to raise money and educate people on behalf of Native Seeds/SEARCH (NS/S).

House parties are widely used and an excellent way for people who care about conserving Southwestern heirloom crops and agricultural heritage to achieve a number of goals:

- Raise funds from current and new supporters to strengthen NS/S's conservation and distribution programs at our farm, seed bank, store and website, and in communities.
- Raise awareness within a social community of NS/S and its mission and activities.
- Promote new friendships, networking and support among people allied to help NS/S.
- Combine flavors of the desert, fun, and support for the organization in one event.

House parties are easy to organize and don't require a long lead time, they're a lot of fun since you get to invite a lot of friends over, and they're excellent ways to sign up new long-term members of an organization that you want to support. **It is very important that the party takes place where you live.** Research shows that people who donate money at a house party have higher long-term relationships with an organization and donate more over time than people who simply respond to a direct-mail solicitation. **Your personal contact and friendship with the people who attend your party makes all the difference.**

This document will walk you through the steps on planning a successful house party. A suggested timeline is at the end of this document, to assist you with scheduling each step (we suggest beginning preparations at least 5 weeks in advance of the party). If you have any questions after reading this guide, please call Robert Traub at (520) 622-0830.

Step 1: Set a Fundraising Goal

It is important to set a goal before you start planning and the goal will depend on the anticipated size of the party and guests. Some house parties may raise \$500; others may raise over \$10,000. Success in reaching your stated goal will depend on identifying the people you want at your party, following up on RSVP's, and announcing the goal that you set at your party. If you don't ask for the money, you won't receive it. Plan out the number of gifts needed to meet your goal.

A sample plan may look like this:

To raise \$5000 from 26 people

1 contribution @ \$1,000=\$1,000

2 contributions @ \$500=\$1,000

4 contributions @ \$350=\$1,400

7 contributions @ \$100=\$700

12 contributions @ \$75= \$900

To make your goal easier to attain, follow-up with guests who do not RSVP and ask them over the phone to make a contribution.

Step 2: Prepare an Invitation List

Your guest list...think big. You generally need to invite three to four times as many people as you want to attend. A house party can have any number of people but generally works best when there are at least ten guests and not more than thirty. Figure out how many people the house or outdoor space can comfortably fit and keep in mind your fundraising goal. Start with your friends and family. But don't forget neighbors and people from your church, synagogue, social clubs, or work.

Step 3: Prepare and Send the Invitations

Send paper invitations to your guests. Invitations should be received by your guests about three weeks before the party. We have a template available that you can download as a PDF and use or you can design your own.

Your invitation should include:

- What the house party is for (a fundraiser for NS/S)
- The date and time of the event (usually no more than 2 hours)
- Name and contact info (phone and email) of the host
- Directions to the home
- A request that people bring their checkbook

The reply card should include:

- RSVP deadline (usually two weeks after mailing)
- Name and contact information of the guest
- How to contribute if the guest is unable to attend:
"I can't come, but here's my contribution of \$____"
- Return envelope with your address (Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope works best)

Step 4: Follow-up Calls

You will have a substantially larger turnout for your event – and raise more money – if you make follow up calls to guests. Starting at least one week before the party, the host should

telephone everyone who has not RSVP'ed. If guests are unable to attend, the follow-up call is a great opportunity to ask for a donation.

Tips for follow up calls:

- Get to the point early on in the conversation. Let your friend know that you are calling about the fundraising event, so you do not find yourself getting into a long chat.
- Ask directly if they are coming to the party.
- If they can't come, ask if they will send a contribution. It is best if you ask for a specific amount of money. For example, *"I'm sorry you won't be able to attend. Can you make a contribution of \$75 to support this important work?"*
- After you ask for the contribution, be silent and wait for the answer. This simple step is very important – resist the temptation to say anything more until they have responded.
- Thank your friend for their time and/or pledge.
- Keep a record of all commitments.

Email reminders out the work day before the party. Persistence is the key. Don't be shy about talking to, inviting and reminding people about your party frequently (how many times have you wished that someone had just reminded you of an event that you wanted to attend and forgot about?). The only way that people will want to get involved is through personal contact with you and others who are attending.

Step 5: Put together the Party Agenda, Prepare your Pitch and Party!

Before your party, it's important to put together your program for the evening...after all, this is a party – with a purpose! The first half hour to hour should be an informal time for guests to arrive, sign in, mingle, snack and to check out information about NS/S. If there is a good chance that not all of your guests will know one another, you may want to provide name tags.

The program part of the party should start no more than one hour into the party so you don't lose momentum and guests. You, as the host, should formally welcome everyone and thank the guests for coming. You will explain the reason for the gathering and the goal of the party. You, or someone familiar with NS/S's work, will briefly talk about what NS/S does and why our work is so important. Native Seeds/SEARCH has available a ten-minute DVD called, *Sharing the Seeds*, that we can provide to you for your party (we will need a couple weeks notice to be sure to get it to you in time for your party). Contact Robert Traub at (520) 622-0830 or rtraub@nativeseeds.org to get your copy. We also have available a sample program and script with FAQ's available for you.

The host of the house party is generally the best person to ask for donations because it is your friends and acquaintances who have come to the party. If you are too uncomfortable with doing so, a friend/colleague who is a peer and passionate about Native Seeds/SEARCH can make the pitch. Donations can be made in a lump sum or as monthly donations. You, your friend, or colleague should practice your ask before the house party.

Immediately after the pitch, pass pens and donation materials (envelopes, contribution slips) around to everyone. To encourage your guests to give, you may want to arrange beforehand for a person to stand up and publicly commit to making a donation that night. They may say something like, “When I came here tonight, I was prepared to make a donation of \$100, but now that I have heard more about how critical Native Seeds/SEARCH is to global and regional food security, I will be giving \$250 and I urge you to stretch your gift, too.” Give them a few minutes to write their checks and fill out the contribution slip (credit card users and monthly donors will need the slip to provide their information to us). Then, have someone actually walk around with a basket to collect the checks, rather than passing the basket or leaving it on the table.

Their gifts are 100% tax deductible.

After the program, some guests will continue to mingle and snack. Before anyone leaves, don't forget to thank them for coming and for their support of such an important organization.

Food and drink: Refreshments can be plain or fancy – it is up to you to serve whatever you are comfortable with and fits within your budget. We have some recipes available to assist you in bringing the flavors of the desert into your home and you can purchase some of the ingredients at our retail or online store. If time allows, you can solicit restaurants or grocery stores to donate food or drink. If you spend money on refreshments please give the total to NS/S and so that we can track it is an in-kind donation. Thank you!

Step 6: Wrap Up

Congratulations – your party was a success! You're not done yet, though. The following day call any people who RSVP'ed and didn't attend and ask them to make a contribution. When you have all checks in hand, please send them, along with the list of attendees (if any guests made donations online, please indicate that to us so that we can be sure to thank them properly), to **Native Seeds/SEARCH, 526 N. 4th Ave, Tucson, AZ 85705, ATTN: Robert Traub**. Within a week of the house party, the host should send a thank-you note to everyone who made a contribution to your cause and tell them how much money was raised. They will also receive a thank you from NS/S after we receive the checks and addresses from you, but a personal touch from you will be appreciated.

Native Seeds/SEARCH wishes you great luck at your house party! Thank you for participating in the conservation of aridlands-adapted agricultural seeds from the Southwest. We could not do this great and important work if not for the support of people like you!

House Party Timeline

What	When it will happen (Week1-5)	Date Completed
1. Make a plan		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose date, time and location of party 	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make fundraising goal, work plan and budget 	1	
2. Prepare invitation list		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm possible attendees 	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track down addresses/phone #s and emails 	1,2	
3. Prepare and send invitations and materials		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare paper invitations/reply cards 	2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mail invitations 	2	
4. Make follow-up calls		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make calls to confirm attendees, ask non-attendees to make a donation 	3,4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send email two business days before the party 	5	
5. Prepare the party plan, pitch and party.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare program and pitch 	4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather materials needed for party 	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy and prepare food and refreshments 	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold the party 	5	
6. Send thank you notes to attendees and donations to Native Seeds/SEARCH.	Within 2 weeks of the event.	