

## **NOFA-NY Annual Workshop, January 2002:**

### **Northeast On-Farm & In-the-Garden Vegetable Development Training Workshop**

The PGRU in collaboration with NOFA-NY (Northeast Organic Farming Organization-NY) and the Department of Plant Breeding and Horticulture Department at Cornell University organized and conducted a one-day training workshop January 25, 2002 as a pre-conference activity of the annual NOFA-NY meeting to develop linkages and provide information to organic farmers about a newly funded IFAFS (Initiative for Future Agricultural and Food Systems) project (Harnessing Investments in Genomics of Model Species for Vegetable Improvement.” The component of this project presented provides for variety demonstrations/trials, small-scale seed production, and farmer-led vegetable breeding. PGRU will have the lead role in the component on small-seed production and will provide significant contributions to the demonstrations and farmer-led breeding components through a RCA, “Promotion of Increased Access and Utilization of Publicly Improved Germplasm.” This workshop was attended by 24 participants eager to participate in one or more of the components presented.

In the morning session the PGRU vegetable curator, Larry Robertson, presented a demonstration of how to access public germplasm using GRIN and worked with the other project partners in moderating a discussion on the goals and aims of the project. Information was obtained about interests, needs, and crops the participants are concerned with. Strong interest was expressed in continued access to heirloom varieties of vegetables and a request was made for a training module for using GRIN to access available germplasm and information about heirlooms. The afternoon session of the workshop was conducted by the seed conservation group and included a general overview of the biological factors concerning small-scale seed production (Larry Robertson), a general overview of farm operations for seed production (Dave Sharman), use of pollinators in seed production (Bill Garman), characterization and utilization (Deb Johnston), and seed threshing, cleaning and storage (John Oughterson). This workshop will be followed up by several yearly workshops that aim to enhance capacities for seed-production by small and/or organic farmers in the northeast US and to increase access to the new publicly bred varieties with improved characteristics such as disease resistance and flavor.