

state in certain varieties of brassicas - in the purple & white early sprouting broccolis, for example - where the inclination of the plant to 'mature' early in the year ensures that it does not fall to the hot weather and hormonal and day-length cocktail (of later-maturing ecologies) but instead reverts to a leafy state and avoids the run to seed. (These, and other varieties such as Pentland Brig Kale harbor genetic promise for those seeking to perennialize brassicas of other forms, perhaps.)

### WHERE DO THE STANDS STAND?

To grossly oversimplify his achievement, Tim's worldwide search for a complementary interplay of genetics gifted him wild perennial grain varieties furnishing the bedrock tendency to perennialize, and highly productive, strongly winter-hardy annual grains.

Introducing these patterns to one another in a manner that Nature hadn't yet orchestrated, Tim has navigated around fatal tillering habits, chromosomal incompatibilities and a slew of other hiccups, to emerge from his lonely decades of devotion with an array of perennial grain material that characteristically sized up into a winter, thus producing a vigorous seedburst into seedstalks in the Spring, encouraging reversion to a vegetative state, and the ability to forge on through the years while concomitantly shaking off the challenges of critters, disease, drought, low fertility, and other potentially fatal vectors including that of a larger culture in the grip of a form of mass insanity. Not bad for a self-taught lad.

Tim's breeding efforts are still a work in progress. He has individual lines and plants exhibiting all the traits he is looking for. What remains, over the short-term, is the fine-tuning to develop a stable profile of these complements.

But he has been releasing this material to the public. Perennial grains are almost impossible to come by. Indeed, I believe Tim's is the only seed catalog in the world making perennial grains readily available for trial - and perhaps the finest exemplars of the archetype, at that.

### INVEST NOW.

Why consider growing these crops just now? Well, for the sheer beauty of the plants, for one. With stalks tillering to 6 feet in height, they make a striking addition to the character of a garden. And I've noticed a fundamental appeal in my own response, and those of others, to this plant - the puppy dog call. Perhaps this has something to do with the great longevity of the humankind-grain relationship, which touches upon some atavistic nostalgia in the human soul. Sheaves of grain lying around my home always appear to induce an awe of sorts in visitors.

Planting these grains now also represents an opportunity to begin familiarizing yourself with a crop destined to move toward center stage in our collective endeavors to handhold the emergence of a robust, healthy regenerative culture. These crops may not be feeding our tribe today. But they will, soon. How do we become familiar with the little uniquenesses of growing them? How do we harvest grains and process them as food? How do we do it speedily? These questions can only be answered by the doing.

We're also presented with an opportunity to step into a big story at an absolutely fascinating juncture of its unfolding. In a forthcoming issue of 'Permaculture News' I hope to outline some of the simple steps we can take to help play a primary role in selecting & stewarding these plants into more sophisticated simpler iterations.

And most important of all, perhaps, as we begin embracing an entity that potentizes qualities of vigor, nutrition, hardiness, resistance to extinction and a whole lot more, in a distillation co-designed by Nature at its wildest (and 'least deceptive') we are proffered insights into how these archetypal qualities can help inform the integrity of our own lives. As Sonathan Swift put it: "A man can no more know his own heart than he can know his own face, any other way than by reflection."

### WHERE TO BEGIN?

Tim suggests considering 4 varieties of perennial and annual grains. These are available on his website, at:

[www.pioneer-net.com/psr/](http://www.pioneer-net.com/psr/)

and I have small quantities available at the FFLC youth farm in Springfield that I would be happy to share. They are:

- ▲ Mountaineer : Perennial Rye
- ▲ PSR 3628 : Perennial Wheat
- ▲ Stephens : Annual Wheat
- ▲ White Popping Annual Sorghum

**WHEN?** For a bountiful wheat & rye harvest by late July, between NOW (Oct) and the end of December is the perfect time to plant (seeding between January & April will give you a harvest later in the year, but with much reduced yields). Seeding into flats, 3 seeds per cell, + culling back to 1 allows you

to begin selecting for vigor from the get go. Transplant out between mid-Dec + February onto 6" - 12" squares. The more room the plants have, the more they will tiller.

**WHERE?** Plant into as clean a ground as possible. Once the plants are established, it's easier for them to fend for themselves. Balance is necessary, but be aware that much as most current human ailments stem from a culture of excess, so fertility can be an enemy of life to plants. Sorghums excepted, p. grains tend to live longer on poorer soils (Mountaineer 2-4 yrs on rich soils : 7-8 on poorer soils). Planting alongside a gravel driveway makes sense.

● For other purposes here, treat sorghum as an annual Spring sown grain. Sow indoors Feb/Mar & transplant April or direct sow post-frost. Grind & use like corn-meal or cornflour.