

South's original peanut provides genetic diversity

In one field just outside Charleston grows the South's original peanut, long thought to be extinct but now primed for revival. Once ubiquitous throughout the South, they were prized for both their flavor and the quality of the oil they produced. The Carolina fell out of favor because its small size made it more difficult to harvest (and less appealing to the eye) and new strains proved more disease-resistant. By the 1950s, it was thought to have disappeared entirely.

But just a couple of years ago, Dr. David Shields, a food historian at University of South Carolina, tracked down a peanut sample, realizing that, in fact, these were the last of the Carolina runners. He contacted Dr. Brian Ward, a horticulturist at Clemson University's vegetable research center and asked him if he'd be willing to cultivate some peanuts for him. Ward agreed. "I didn't know at the time I'd been given half the seeds in existence," he says.

Ward has been their only grower for the last two years.

"The fact that this cultivar is on the verge of being generally released after being on the verge of extinction is largely due to his talent as an organic cultivator," says Shields.

From the original handful, Ward has managed to produce enough seeds to start 1,200 plants last year. This year, he will be able to provide seeds to commercial growers. These peanuts don't have the resistance to disease that has been bred into modern ones, but they do provide vital genetic diversity.

Read full, original article: [The Original Southern Peanut Was Thought To Be Extinct, But One Farmer Is Bringing It Back](#)