



Jere with his parents

Jere Gettle always had a passion for growing things. With the help of his parents, he planted his first garden at age 3 and became enchanted by the possibilities of what could be created with seeds, sunshine, and soil. As his love for gardening grew, one of his favorite activities was looking through the colorful seed catalogs and deciding what he would plant next. As time passed, though, he realized that some of his favorite vegetable varieties were disappearing from the beloved seed catalogs. That is when it became his mission to save the diversity of seeds. He began saving, collecting, and trading seeds. By age 13, preserving historical varieties had become his mission in life.

At the age of 17, he printed the first small Baker Creek Heirloom Seed catalog in 1998. While that first catalog was little more than just a photocopied price list, it has evolved into a beautiful and colorful seed catalog that boasts a listing for more than 1,400 seed varieties and is distributed to 350,000 potential customers. Packing seeds as a teenager from his bedroom has grown into an international business that sells more than 2 million seed packets per year. The company has become a tool to promote and preserve our agricultural and culinary heritage.

His little homestead near Mansfield, Missouri, now includes an impressive seed store, 2 huge warehouses for storing and packing seeds, multiple trial gardens, and an entire pioneer village consisting of a vegan restaurant, general mercantile, apothecary, flour mill bakery, blacksmith shop, outdoor stone oven and multiple music stages that serve as locations for traditional music during the monthly heritage festivals and huge Spring Planting Festival in May.



Jere with Emilee & Sasha

Over the last several years, Jere Gettle and his wife Emilee have branched out into other related projects as well, including the nationally distributed *Heirloom Gardener* magazine, which is now in its 9th year of publication. They have also expanded to a location in Petaluma, California, with their Seed Bank, a beautiful historic bank building that houses their Baker Creek retail seed operation. They also purchased and are working to restore and preserve Comstock, Ferre & Company, the oldest continuously operating seed company in New England. They have recently published 2 books: a general gardening book entitled *The Heirloom Life Gardener* and *The Baker Creek Vegan Cookbook*.

The Gettles work extensively to supply free seeds to many of the world's poorest countries, as well as here at home in school gardens and other educational projects. It is their goal to educate everyone about a better, safer food supply and fight gene-altered Frankenfood and the companies that support it.