

New Year's Shopping By Julie Silva

If all the calendars in the world evaporated how would you know it was a new year? It would not be the winter equinox, with the days becoming longer. The true signal of the new year is a mailbox full of seed catalogs. The optimum sign of new beginnings for gardeners is stacks of catalogs for spring planting.

With a stack three inches high of catalogs sitting on the dining room table, how do you know what to order? The new world has made it clear that our gardens are the grocery stores we own. Growing your own has benefits: fresh food, less expense and a dose of sunshine and fresh air.

Deciding what to plant is always difficult. Last year brought us new frustrations with the disappearance of many necessities. Let's apply those lessons to seed purchases. Remember searching for eggs, toilet paper, and disinfecting wipes? Those items disappeared and some have yet to completely return.

How do eggs relate to seed purchases? Eggs disappeared but came back quickly. Those laying hens just had their lights left on longer and egg production ramped up. As with eggs, look at the ease of production when choosing seeds. Your seeds should be appropriate for your growing area and be able to grow easily. An excellent example is squash. Squash is ready to eat within 45 to 65 days from transplanting, depending on the variety. Try the new Lemon squash. It is ready in 55 days, has heavy continuous production, has an upright growth habit and has a small lemon shape. So, choosing seeds that grow well and feed your family easily helps the family grocery garden.

How does the toilet paper hoarding help you choose seeds? Scarcity makes desire stronger and need increase. New varieties of seeds are limited in production. They are like the new heroes with attributes like early ripening, increased production, and superior disease-resistant plants. Those attributes perfectly describe the new "Ring Leader," hybrid jalapenos. Production increases make sure that you will have a bumper crop of jalapenos to stuff or pickle.

Another new sweet pepper, PeppiGrande Red Hybrid is seedless. PeppiGrande Reds are large, sweet peppers perfect for roasting. To achieve seed free-peppers, plant PeppiGrande separate from any other pepper plants, because cross-pollination could actually make them grow seeds.

Some plants have disappeared, just like disinfecting wipes. The disinfecting wipes rule is simple; if you see it and love it you better get it right now! If your family loves Kiwano and the catalog only has 10 seeds per order, then January is the time to order them. Just like wipes, there are promises of more inventories in the future. That future could be one year or five years. The things we have learned!

When you receive your new seeds, keep them cool and dry. The back of the seed packet will have the best information regarding when and how to start them. Check to see when your area has the last estimated frost date and count back with the amount of time for your plants to get to the size to be put out. Remember to harden the plants off slowly, giving them time outside in the shade and morning sun then return them indoors or in a protected spot.

The Family Grocery Garden is an excellent way to provide your family with good food. Take your time and look through those catalogs. There are many varieties that are to be discovered with new flavors and storage lengths. Picking out your high-demand seeds now will give you first choice while there is still available inventory.

Join the rest of the gardeners that have a positive approach for 2021 with good food and even better growing. Happy New Year!

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