

Home/Garden

Planning a garden begins with the seed order

Planning the garden actually starts when you sit down with a stack of catalogs to prepare your seed order. Making ordering decisions never becomes any easier or quicker for me, because while my garden doesn't get any bigger, there are standard favorites that I have to grow, and there are wonderful new varieties that I've GOT to try. Here are the questions I ask myself as I make up the seed order:

WHAT ARE THE FAMILY FAVORITES? We are big vegetable eaters and I like to plant everything from beans to zucchini.

OLD FAVORITES OR NEW IMPROVED VARIETIES? Pencil Pod wax beans, Jacobs Cattle beans, Green Ice lettuce, Scarlet Nantes carrots and Early Girl tomatoes have been standards in my garden for the last few years. I'm perfectly happy with them, yet I'm drawn to some of the new varieties that promise more flavor, more compact growth and more disease resistance, which is very important to me since I garden without poisons.

One of the reasons home vegetable gardening remains so popular is that people want to be able to pass up supermarket produce that is grown for ease of harvest and shipping, not excellence of flavor. Seed companies will note which of their varieties are particularly flavorful. The Celebrity tomato was introduced a couple of years ago and is popular because it's easy to grow, highly disease resistant, and real good eating.

I'm instantly drawn to new varieties that promise dependability. I hate failure, but I know I'm not always as organized and careful as I should be. Orient Express is a new early eggplant that promises to set

Pat Leuchtman
Between The Rows



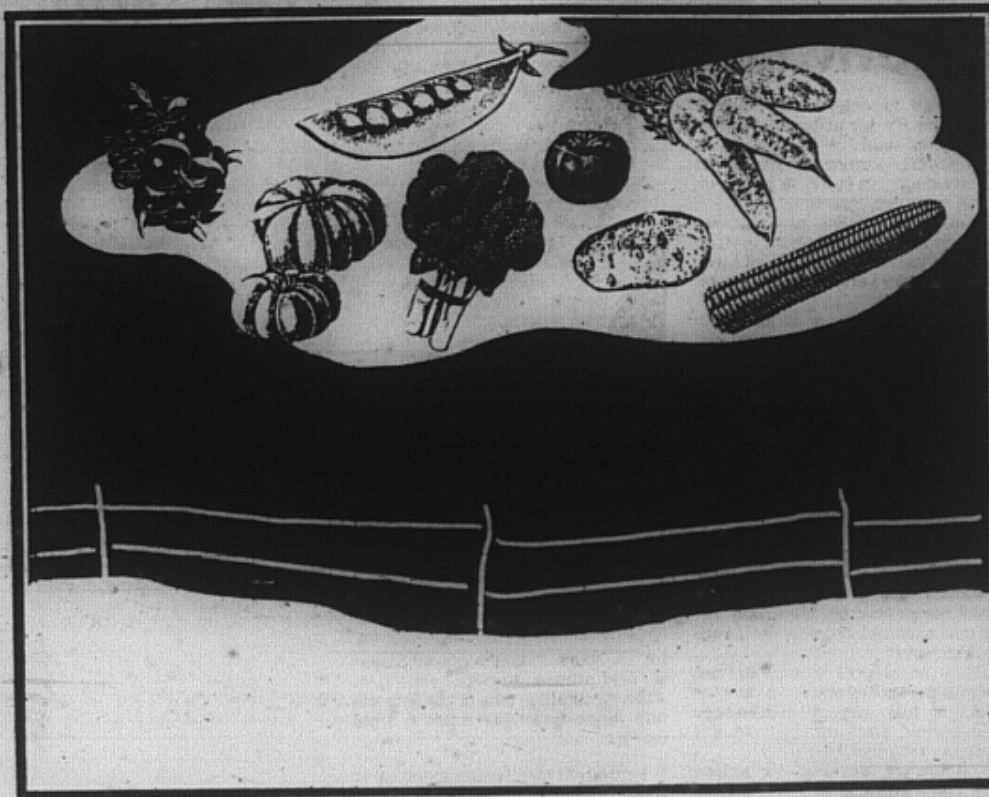
Fruit in cool weather or under heat stress.

Since my garden isn't getting any bigger I'm also drawn to varieties that take less space. Hybridizers have been sensitive to the problem of limited space. Salad Bush is the newest bush cuke, joining Spacemaster and Bush Champion. Early White Bush produces white patty pan squash on a bush, Butterbush is an early butternut squash and Bushkin pumpkin is a triple threat, it's good for pies and seed snacks as well as making a nice jack o' lantern.

Finally and most importantly, I look for varieties that promise more nutrition and more disease resistance. The Sweet Million tomato is a supersweet cherry tomato that is resistant to Fusarium Wilt, nematodes, Tobacco Mosaic and Septoria Leaf Spot. Jersey Golden Acorn squash has a semi-bush growth habit and has three times the vitamin A of green acorn squash varieties.

WHAT ARE THE SPECIALTY OR NOVELTY CROPS? Sometimes I plant vegetables because they are trendy - or just plain fun. Last year I tried Giulio radicchio. It was easy to grow, beautiful with deep red leaves and I liked the flavor although my husband didn't. Still I liked eating a beautifully composed salad that would have cost a fortune in some fashionable city restaurant.

Baby vegetables have also been in



Recorder/Lucia Russom

vogue, although the trendy food mavens in my neighborhood say their popularity is waning. Mini Green produces four-inch-long miniature bean pods 52 days after planting. There's even a miniature pumpkin, Jack Be Little, that produces fruits

only two-by-three inches that will fit in a child's hand.

Some vegetables are fun because they are an unusual color. Rubine brussel sprouts are an attractive red, Rubens and Garnet lettuces are red and green, while the Gold Nug-

get cherry tomato ripens early and is nearly seedless. Purple Podded pole beans are a rich royal color — until you cook them. After blanching they are a deep green. This bit of kitchen magic will astound the kiddies. Purple Head cauliflower acts

One of the reasons home vegetable gardening remains so popular is that people want to be able to pass up supermarket produce that is grown for ease of harvest and shipping, not excellence of flavor.

the same way — turning from purple to green when it is blanched in boiling water.

HOW WILL I PRESERVE OR STORE MY HARVEST? The less work I have to do, the better, so I'm partial to carrots and beets that store well in a root cellar. Rumba is a new nantes carrot that keeps especially well and Lutz Green Leaf is an excellent storage beet. I also grow winter squash that is happy in an unheated bedroom and dried beans that sit in jars on the pantry shelf.

Mail order sources: The Cook's Garden (\$1 refundable on order) Box 65, Londonderry, VT 05148; Johnny's Selected Seeds, Albion, ME 04910; Nichols Garden Nursery, 1190 N. Pacific Hwy, Albany, OR 97321; Pine-tree Garden Sees, Rt. 1, Box 397, New Gloucester, ME 04260; Shepherd's Garden Seeds (\$1 catalog) 7389 W. Zayante Rd., Felton, CA 95018; Vermont Bean Seed Co., Box 250, Fair Haven, VT 05743-01250.