



Virginia Green Industry Council

For Immediate Use

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Electronic Version:

www.viriniagreen.org

Seed Catalogues – A Tonic for the Winter Blues

Wintertime is traditionally a good time for weekend ski trips, finishing a long-put-off project around the house or cozying up with the latest novel in front of the fireplace. For most gardeners there is another wintertime activity they look forward to—perusing the new seed catalogues and planning for springtime pleasure and beauty.

Catalogs about gardening are always part of the winter gardening experience. These colorful publications provide information on new varieties, new products and pesticide alternatives, and often have wonderful and beautiful garden planting plans. A list of the new annuals to bring the brightest and most successful plants to gardeners is featured in every catalog. These All-American Winners are plants that have been chosen for their performance in test gardens all across the country and you can count on them to be among the most weather tolerant, disease resistance and provide the most color through the season. Read the description of the cultivars listed and look for words like “resistant to,” “hardy to,” “survived to” and “performs well under.” All of these statements encourage you to select the ones most likely to survive and thrive in your garden. Whatever the reason, many gardeners select the same plant year after year without introducing the great variety of plants that will thrive in their yards. Catalogs can provide a tempting array of alternatives and often reward us with unexpected beauty in our landscape.

“There are many kinds of projects you can begin this winter that will reap you and your family rewards both pleasurable and practical come spring and summer,” says Lin Diacont, President of the Virginia Green Industry Council. “Why not try your hand at starting some plants this winter under special lights?” Who would not be cheered by the sight of bright red impatiens blossoming in February? Or a wax begonia thriving in a sunless corner of the house during a snowstorm in March? With the use of fluorescent grow lights, hundreds of plants can be grown indoors during the winter. House plants are not the only subjects for indoor gardening. Many gardeners start seeds of flowers and vegetables weeks before it is warm enough to plant them outdoors.

Catalogs are also an excellent planning tool for the vegetable garden. Whether you have a large back yard or only the patio outside your apartment, all vegetable gardens should begin with a plan on paper to insure the maximum use of space. Raised beds, plant containers and window boxes all allow for growing vegetables in a limited amount of space. Using the information provided in your seed catalogs, select the vegetable varieties appropriate for your garden site and growing conditions. Consider planting fast-maturing vegetables like lettuce and spinach at two weeks intervals to lengthen the harvest. Follow those plants with slow-growing ones like tomatoes. And don’t forget the herbs. Most are easy to grow and will provide flavor and spice to many foods.

In addition to wonderful pictures and valuable information about vegetables and flowers, most catalogs have a section on the latest gardening tools, composting products and a wonderful array of books and informational references. Some even provide information on how to purchase beneficial insects such as Lady Beetles and Praying Mantis.

Seed catalogs can help you make 2005 your best gardening year ever. If nothing else, these wintertime tools for planning for sunny days ahead can lift spirits, fight boredom and inspire the creative side of your psyche.

Go to our consumer website for additional gardening information at www.VirginiaGardening.com

The Virginia Green Industry Council is the voice of the horticulture industry in the Commonwealth and is dedicated to enhancing the beauty of the state’s environment, the well-being of our citizens, improving our state’s economy, and improving the health and wellness for everyone in Virginia. The Council is made up of providers and consumers of horticultural products and services. The Council works to provide public and industry education, environmental guidelines and other information that will keep Virginia green and growing. For more information, visit www.viriniagreen.org. 540-382-0943 FAX: 540-382-2716

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