

KPOV – *The Point*
Gardening: Get Good At It
“Getting the Most from Seed Catalogs – Part 2”
March 6, 2018

This is part 2 on getting the most of seed catalogs which aired earlier. I talked about the photos and the words “new” or “improved” as well as the icons used to highlight key traits.

One icon I’d like to mention again is the red, white and blue “All-America Selection” shield. A packet with this symbol has won the award of superior as judged by professionals nationwide. This is always a wise selection if the days to maturity meet the short growing season of Central Oregon.

Descriptions in the seed catalog are useful for specifics such as fruit or flower color, particular flavors of vegetables, heights and spreads. Even these may vary greatly among catalogs, so compare several. Beware of general and glowing adjectives such as “good”, “popular” or “large”, as these are relative and may have little meaning in your own garden. Just as the photos are often “enhanced” so are many descriptions so don’t get disappointed if your flowers and vegetables don’t look as luscious.

To avoid ending up with too many seeds, roughly map out your garden to scale, then “fit in” the varieties you want to grow. A good catalog will give the approximate seeds per packet, and spacing when planting seedlings or sowing seeds. So, for instance, for sweet corn you may see 150 seeds per packet. If the recommendation is to plant 3 seeds per foot, this packet would sow 50 feet of row. That’s a lot of corn for a small garden so you may want to only plant half the package.

You should also see growing tips for each crop. Using the example of corn again, it’s best to plant several rows close together for best pollination. So rather than one long row, five 10-foot rows, three feet apart would be better. So the simple math means you need an area 10 feet by 3 feet, or 30 square feet for just this packet of corn seeds.

The good news is, if you end up with too many seeds, most store well for a year or more in a jar in the refrigerator or a cool place during our winter in Central Oregon. I’ll include a list of seeds and their viability details on our website.

If you don’t have any catalogs, and aren’t on their mail lists already, search online for some. You can invariably order up a printed copy to be mailed from their websites, as well as see the range of plants they offer and any specialties. Especially in the case of vegetables, if you like a crop in particular, such as lettuce or tomatoes or peppers, you may be surprised how many selections you can find. Just remember, don’t get carried away with more than you and your garden space can handle – something I continually seem to neglect!

So let’s review your seed selection: All aspects of gardening require advance planning, including seed selection. The selection depends on your preferences and needs, space available, and time that you can allocate to gardening.

In Central Oregon, choosing the correct variety is essential for success. The maturity date listed in the catalog should fall between 65 and 75 days. To compensate for the temperature swing of warm days and cool nights, add 14 days to the listed maturity date for a more realistic sense of when a plant will reach maturity.

My personal recommendation is to visit your local Extension Office and receive a copy of 'Growing Vegetables in Central Oregon. It will help you navigate through any garden catalog and even has best varieties for successful gardening in our area.

For answers to all your garden questions, visit our website: gocomga.com and [click on the KPOV tab on the orange bar](#). This has been Gardening: Get Good At It.

VIABILITY OF VEGETABLE SEEDS

Vegetable	Years*	Vegetable	Years*
Asparagus	3	Leek	1
Bean	3	Lettuce	5
Beet	4	Muskmelon	5
Broccoli	5	Onion	1
Cabbage	5	Parsley	2
Carrot	3	Pea	3
Cauliflower	5	Pepper	4
Celery	5	Pumpkin	4
Corn	5	Radish	5
Cucumber	5	Spinach	5
Eggplant	5	Sweet Corn	1
Kale	5	Tomato	4

References:

Sustainable Gardening: The Oregon–Washington Master Gardener Handbook EM 8742
Growing Vegetables in Central Oregon – Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson Counties EM 9128
pss.uvm.edu/ppp/articles/armchair.html - Dr. Leonard Perry, Extension Professor