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Mother Earth

Going to Seed

By Gayle Morrow

“Unusual weather we’re having, ain’t it?” said the Cowardly Lion when snow began to fall on the poppy field. I’ve said it myself more than once as a long, mild fall lingered into winter. As I write, the prediction is for a few inches of snow overnight, a few days of colder temps, then back to mid-to-upper thirties; who knows what the weather will be by the time you have this issue in your hand.

Regardless, it is January, and I’ve had my 2012 seed catalogs since well before Christmas. We will be back at planting in just a few months, so it is not too early to peruse what’s available, to think about what to start indoors under lights, and to dream a bit about what our gardens might be looking like in six months.

For aesthetic appeal and fun readability, I think the *Fedco Seeds* (Waterville, Maine, www.fedcoseeds.com) catalog is the best. The line drawings are a hoot, and the writings on each seed offering are not only grammatically correct but incredibly informative. Where else can you get a history lesson (albeit a brief one) on Anabaptists as you’re reading about Hutterite beans?

The Seed Savers Exchange (Decorah, Iowa, www.seedsavers.org) is an organization dedicated to saving “North America’s diverse but endangered garden heritage” by facilitating seed saving, particularly the open-pollinated and heirloom varieties, and by seed exchange. The *Seed Savers Exchange* catalog includes profiles of people who have saved heirloom seeds from extinction and the folks who are growing the plants from which the seeds are now produced. It is chock-full of useful facts for gardeners and eaters.

Johnny’s Selected Seeds (Winslow, Maine, Johnnyseeds.com), an employee-owned company, has long been the homestead gardener’s bible. The catalog gives detailed growing information on every offering. Where else might you easily find what the optimum soil temperature is for starting Chioggia Guardsmark? Where else might you find what on earth Chioggia Guardsmark is? (It’s a kind of beet, an “improved strain of Chioggia, selected for better skin color, candy striping, and tolerance to bolting.”)

All three catalogs have a great collection of how-to books (who can



resist *The Joy of Rhubarb?*), handy tools for little and big gardens, and amazing sections on flowers and herbs. Enjoy your catalogs with coffee or a cocktail—you can easily while away a morning or an evening deciding between Mammoth Grey Stripe or Moulin Rouge. Maybe you should just order both.

There you have it. Go forth and plan your garden. 🌱



Gayle Morrow, former editor of *The Wellsboro Gazette*, cooks locally, and organically, at the *West End Market Café*.