

Big things come in small packages

Territorial Seed Co. builds an international brand locally

Did you know that the average distance any supermarket-bound vegetable or fruit travels to the store is 800 miles? But a gardener's own fruits and vegetables move from the garden to the table within minutes, with every ounce of nutritional value intact. Tom and Julie's first Territorial Seed catalogs offered a fresh-from-the-garden look and alternative, as Tom focused on expanding selections of customers' favorites; more tomatoes (from 15 varieties to 75), then sweet peas, garlic, year-round lettuces and sunflowers for the birds. After the regional catalog came a national catalog and a Canadian catalog. Their Winter Garden Catalog, first published in 1988, remains the only winter garden catalog in the United States.

In 1987, Tom and Julie invested in 44 acres for trial grounds at London Springs south of Cottage Grove Lake. Each year Territorial's research garden staff grows and evaluates thousands of varieties for best taste, Northwest hardiness, and good germination. More recently they began reclaiming older, favorite vegetable varieties sometimes shelved by their seed suppliers. Harvesting their very tiny product has been their biggest challenge. In Lorane, they dried the bean pods on ground tarps and winnowed the seed from the pods by hand. Then they tried grinding tomatoes in a garden variety chipper-shredder and fluming the seeds out, similar to panning for gold. But seeds still keep their age-old secrets of survival, and Territorial's seed saving techniques range from natural fermentation to the newest processors. Today they grow almost 20% of the seed they offer, especially lettuces, tomatoes, cucumbers, and squash.

Currently they find themselves in good company, "capital-O Organics", excited about taking leadership in advising the evolution of organic agriculture from a movement into a mainstream

market. There are 20 full-time and 25 seasonal employees locally, strategic alliances with universities and European plant breeders and a zillion worms making compost and plant teas. Plant the seed, they say...or buy, grow, harvest and clean, store, catalog, package, sprout and love each seed and take a capital-O Opportunity to grow your dreams with Territorial Seed Company, Cottage Grove, Oregon.



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