

Winter harvest: Seed catalogs sow ideas for the spring

■ Cold, snowy days are ideal for sitting down and planning the garden you'd like to grow once winter gives way to spring

By Liz Douville

ForWesCom News Service

One day in October, as my garden was in the final stages of fall cleanup, I decided to take a break and check the mailbox. What did I find? Two seed catalogs awaited my perusal. I thought: Give me a break, I just put my garden to sleep.

I have often been asked if I wouldn't love to move to a climate where I could garden all year. The answer is a resounding no. I think part of the excitement of gardening is the anticipation over the winter months of discovering new varieties, doing research and daydreaming about the next garden.

Years ago the seed catalogs didn't start arriving until Thanksgiving week, even into December. We would stockpile them without a peek. The tradition was to save them for New Year's Day.

With one eye on the football game of the day, Dick (my late husband) managed to concentrate on seed selections and tag the pages with yellow Post-it notes, especially tomato varieties, while never missing a critical touchdown.

I like keeping with that tradition and perhaps that is why I almost feel insulted when seed catalogs arrive in early October. Do you remember the character Tevye in "Fiddler on the Roof" exclaiming in a song that tradition is "how we keep our balance"? Those are wise words.



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Frost still lies on foliage but it's not too early to start perusing seed catalogs and planning your 2019 garden.

In keeping with tradition, I am looking through the catalogs for new tomato varieties to try.

My choices won't necessarily be new to the market, but rather new for me to try. I will never forsake my tried and true favorites: sweet million cherry, legend, an Oregon State University developed slicer; and cobra, a greenhouse variety.

The main criterion used for seed selection is that the plant has to mature in our climate's growing time frame. If the variety has a maturity date of 90-plus days, I eliminate the choice. The maturity date in the catalog should be between 65 and 75 days. Our

days can swing from warm days to often very cool nights. To compensate for that temperature difference, we add 14 days, which brings us to a more realistic maturity date of 79 to 89 days.

That's not to say I won't fudge a little knowing I won't have any room for complaint if I don't have a successful harvest.

I am already tempted by a variety that has been featured for several years. Sweet aperitif is an English cherry variety described as "bursting with a complex, wine-like taste and tropical aroma." The maturity date listed is 80 days. Adding 14 days brings the tomato to a possible har-

vest in 94 days.

The All-America Selection for 2019 is Sparky XSL F1, a cherry tomato that is supposed to be early to harvest, prolific and very flavorful. The listed maturity date is 60 to 70 days. Adding 14 days brings maturity within our range. The ripe color is red with gold striping. Unfortunately, I have yet to locate a source.

I still have to research a Roma type tomato for making sauces and add another slicer for table use.

OSU has developed at least 10 tomato varieties for growing in the less-than-ideal climates of the Pacific Northwest. Sadly, I have noticed

fewer of the OSU developed varieties appearing in the catalogs. Most were developed between the 1960s and the 1990s. The latest is the Indigo Series, with indigo rose being the first release in 2012. The colorful tomatoes are high in anthocyanin, a powerful antioxidant.

I have made a dent in the seven catalogs I have received, but still to come is Territorial from Cottage Grove. Hopefully, meanwhile, Nichols Nursery in Garden Grove will print an abbreviated selection of its inventory, as it did last year. The nursery's complete catalog is online.

Renee's Garden in Felton, California, offers a fundraiser to non-profit organizations and schools. Renee's is well known for offering hardy European vegetable varieties.

A 25 percent rebate on seed orders is awarded to organizations and schools that have applied.

Through experience, many

of us have come to know the importance of ordering seeds early, especially new varieties that may be limited. Also, electronic postings may offer sale items.



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CAULIFLOWER

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I cue up the remixed "White Album." Dressed in an elegantly distressed white T-shirt, I reveal the location — kitchen table — and enjoy Diner en Blanc, home-style.

CAULIFLOWER

Prep: 15 minutes
Cook: 30 minutes
Makes: 4 servings

2 firm heads cauliflower
Olive oil
1 clove garlic
1 teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
4 to 6 anchovy fillets
Freshly squeezed lemon juice
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
Pecorino Romano cheese, grated, optional

1. Roast: Heat oven to 425. Trim away cauliflower cores; cut the heads into florets. Toss with 2 tablespoons olive

oil and spread out on a rimmed baking sheet. Roast until tender and browned in many spots, tossing once or twice, 25 to 30 minutes.

2. Mash: Meanwhile, use a mortar and pestle to mash garlic and salt to a paste. Drop in pepper and anchovies and mash. Work in 2 teaspoons lemon juice and ¼ cup olive oil.

3. Toss: When cauliflower is done, scrape it into a serving bowl. Toss with anchovy sauce. Taste and add lemon juice or olive oil if needed. Sprinkle with chopped parsley and a little cheese, if you like.

GARDEN

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Drain water, rinse with fresh water. Do not let the seeds dry out, but keep damp for another 12-24 hours. By this time you should see evidence of germination.

Place the germinated seeds thickly on top of damp potting mix in a pot (with drain holes) about 6 inches tall. Leave room so you are not filling the pot clear to the top. Cover the seeds with damp potting mix. Press soil down firmly and water well.

In a day or two the little blades of grass should start erupting through the surface of the soil. After the grass is 2 or so inches high, you can sit the pot down where the kitty has access to it. It is a real plus if there is a place with good lighting to keep the grass healthy and growing well.

When you set the grass down for your kitty to have, think about starting another container of grass, as the first one will not last very long. It will get overgrown and become tough and fibrous and unappealing to your cat. The grass is most nutritious and tender when it first sprouts.

You will need several containers of kitty grass to get you through the winter.

Seed/nursery catalogs will start arriving this time of year if you have ever ordered any seeds or plants in the past. This is so that you can dream of pleasant summer times in your garden and figure out what plants you want to work with in the garden in summer of 2019. Also they hope you dream big and over-order. It is never too early to start planning.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write: greengardencolumn@yahoo.com Thanks for reading!

DORY

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Then there were the free movies at the theatre — cowboy shows, cartoons, and being in company of siblings and cousins.

There was standing in line outside the Elks building beside the huge lighted evergreen tree that took up most of the city street at the corner of Fourth Street and Washington Avenue, having watched it being brought in by truck and secured on a base to give pleasure to everyone who passed by. In anticipation we waited for our turn to receive the brown paper sack of hard Christmas candy, nuts, and sometimes an orange. There was always a chocolate drop with cream center and we

bit into it to see if the center was white or pink. If it was pink, we were told, we got a second one. Somehow mine was always white.

The Eagles Fraternity Lodge always did something similar for the children of its members and store windows were filled with wonderful things to see even while you knew they were beyond the reach of your ever owning any of them. It was filling enough to just look and be fed emotionally by all the season could bring.

There were the church services and being costumed to be part of the scene with carols to sing everywhere you went.

The Christmas season was more than a holiday. It had a special meaning with

a beginning and a regretful end each year, but there was time to anticipate, a time to enjoy, and a time to put away as school hours returned and vacation ended.

Things nowadays seem to come and go so quickly that I wonder what can be remembered for its happening.

My Christmas decorations now all packed and ready to put back on the shelf for another year with the 1985 Montgomery Ward Christmas catalog on top give hope for the next year — Is it really tomorrow already?

No, I think it must still be the days of my youth when the 1930s catalogs came and were emotionally digested by my sister and brother and I, then moving forward to the 1950s and Christmas

under my own family's tree, all long before the 1985 catalog was considered but it remains a point in time when anticipation and hope meant something.

Now January closes the door on both memory and reality, for valentines already replace holiday decorations in the stores and we move along with the swelling tide of commercialism, Christmas and New Years already long forgotten. I ask myself — Did the children anticipate the whole Christmas season as well as the gifts under the tree and did they have time to enjoy just being? Will they remember, as the elderly do this day?

There is no time to remember or question. We must move on.

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