

Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson



This is amazing weather, ain't it? (Yes, I realize that particular phrase is incorrect but it seems somehow appropriate as we are all reduced to a simpler lifestyle with limited transportation and lack of electricity.) My Dad says that the only snowstorm he remembers lasting this long was in 1936, before I was born. I certainly don't remember snow on the ground.

Since nobody can get outside to do anything, this is a great time to plan, repair and tune-up tools, and research. I've been doing a couple of things (besides books, puzzles and videos). First, though I am most emphatically NOT a good Internet researcher, I did a simple Yahoo search for "gardening in the Pacific Northwest" which yielded almost 1500 entries. Needless to say, I did not look at them all, but a couple that I looked at stand out, were easy to use, and fun, even with my slow dial-up connection.

I LOVE the name of the first site I looked at <slugsand salal.com>. Though a commercial site, it had lots of information, including a To Do List, chat groups, lists

of events and clubs. I didn't like a second commercial site that I checked because it immediately had at least two associated pop-ups. All of the catalogue companies mentioned later in this column have websites; some offer a discount for ordering online. If you don't have Internet service or a computer, both are available for use in the library free of charge.

The other site I really liked is <gardenweb.com>. Beside being chock full of information, forums on every imaginable garden plant, type, region and topic, this site includes a botanical glossary, a directory of non-profit organizations, and a plant database with links to sources. The site also includes an extensive "Bazaar" where you can request catalogues on-line or link directly to a catalogue or product site. For a small fee, you can also become a member and post your own page, telling others about yourself and your garden, and offering plants and seeds for exchange. Though it's too late for Christmas, there is an easy set-up for giving this membership as a gift to your favorite gardener. There is even a "Mystery Plant" contest monthly!

I also looked at a very tempting piece of garden software that purportedly is able to keep track of everything a gardener might need or want to remember – planting, cultural and harvest info, designs, want lists, reference material, make you own plant labels, and on and on. Is anybody using garden software that you like? It would be nice to be able to compare several products before spending the bucks.

And, of course, the catalogues are arriving! Many of these are basically free gardening texts, even if you never place an order. Two brief notes: Seeds by mail are generally, though not always, better quality than seeds from the grocery store; also, be sure you are ordering something that will grow in our climate.

Here is a brief review of what I've kept:

☼ Park's Seeds (800-845-3369) – Interesting collections and seed mats and tapes.

☼ Select Seeds (800-684-0395) – "Heirloom treasures for modern gardens, seeds and plants including a fragrant moon garden featured in *Country Living Gardener*."

☼ Gardener's Supply Company (800-427-3363) – Cool tools, watering aids and toys.

☼ The Cook's Garden (800-457-9703) – Interesting seed varieties for the gourmet cook and the best illustrations (Mary Azarian woodcuts) and recipes.

☼ Seeds of Change (888-762-7333) – Organic, heirloom varieties, good website, good books that include the spiritual and cultural impact of gardens and gardening, but their research farm is in New Mexico so I've never ordered seeds from them.

☼ Territorial Seed Company (541-942-9547) – Pacific northwest standard for plants, seeds that grow here and cultural information and tools for both the home and market gardener.

☼ White Flower Farm (800-503-9624) – Very expensive plants, often rare and/or patented, but great perennial cultural information and awesome photos to inspire plant combinations.

☼ Raintree Nursery (360-496-6400) – Another northwest favorite for fruit trees and ornamentals with lots of good info. It's worth a trip to Morton, Wash., for a spring class and a visit to the nursery. You can get discounted trees and plants in Morton!

☼ Jackson & Perkins (800-292-4769) – Bulbs and perennials, spendy but best quality.

☼ American Meadows (802-951-5812) – Wildflowers in bulk! Grow your own meadow with a mix, or order any one of 70 varieties of seed by the pound

These last three I'm ordering from because they offer \$20 gift certificates for early orders. I've ordered a little more than the minimum in order to maximize the shipping charges.

☼ Henry Field's Seed & Nursery Co. (513-354-1494) – \$40 minimum order to get the \$20 off. I'm ordering a collection of ferns (12 plants of 4 varieties) and 5 soapwort plants for less than \$30 or just over \$1.75 per plant. I've never ordered from this company so this will be a new experience.

☼ Gurney's Seed & Nursery Co. (513-354-1491) – Big catalogue full of all kinds of seeds and plants. Almost no cultural information, particularly about region-specific flowers and veggies BUT a no minimum \$20 gift certificate before 2/18. I'm ordering a new-to-me slug-killing product, peat pellet pots, a hosta I've wanted for a while and a large red lobelia for \$1 more than the price of the Escar-Go alone.

☼ Gardens Alive (513-354-1482) – This is a keeper because of the "20-page illustrated guide to insects, diseases and nutrient deficiencies in the garden and orchard." I often don't use the products they recommend (expensive, though they are organic) but the guide has proved useful. Again, no minimum order, so I'm going to try a new product called Green Guard that they say will stimulate plants growth and self-defense response and increase plant health, yielding improved quality, increased harvest and better ability to stay fresh after harvest.

I'm also ordering an organic moss-removing product that I have used before, for the roof, that worked really well, and will add nutrients to the soil, and some wood labels. The gift certificate will make the new Green Guard free.

I am also requesting a catalogue from Trees of Antiquity (805-467-2509) to look at their heirloom fruit trees.

Spring will come. The snow is melting now, thankfully, slowly. For the first year in a long time I'm looking forward to the wonderful new greens of spring. It's amazing how absence makes the heart grow fonder. I won't be complaining about the Sea of Green this year after its complete disappearance under the snow. Stay warm, dry and toasty while you dream.

Garden To-Do List

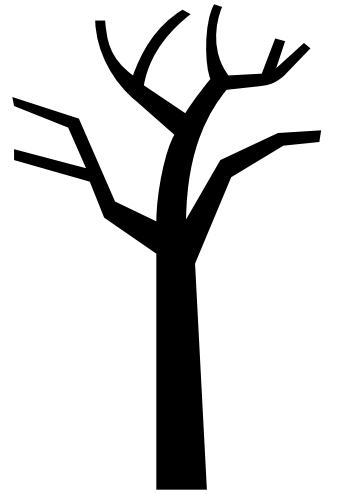
There actually are things you can DO this month, even with that insulating layer of snow on the ground.

- Inventory seeds before ordering more. I think I finally planted the last of the spinach and radish seeds that I accumulated because I didn't inventory first.

- Watch for warm dry weather so you can apply dormant sulphur spray to fruit trees and ornamentals.

- Check that the soil under the eaves is damp and that stored fuchsias have not dried out or become home to pests.

- Start lettuce and other greens to set out under cover next month.



I've been asked about pruning fruit trees with the snow on the ground and I don't know (yet) whether this is a good idea or not. Personally, I don't want to stomp around in the stuff so I'm waiting for a melt.

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