

Specialty seed catalogs deliver quality

I have learned to be discerning when it comes to catalog shopping. I steer clear of outrageous or cheap deals. I prefer the specialty catalog where expertise reigns providing us with both a good product and the information to grow it well. I shop locally as much as I can but for some crops, we must turn to the catalogs that are filling the mailbox this time of the year. I pour over the pages looking for the odd, heirloom and favorite staple; and I order early because some rare finds are often limited in supply. Companies will send seeds anytime, but plants will not be sent until recommended planting times for our zone. Wood Prairie Farm (800-829-9765 or www.woodprairie.com) in Bridgewater, Maine has the best organic seed potatoes. They



JENEEN WICHE

offer a wide range of varieties providing information on ideal cooking methods, harvest time, color, disease resistance and storage. Wood Prairie Farm also offers vegetable seed and whole grains like spelt, meal, ryes and wheat; a new last year was a sweet potato collection that comes from a (collaboration) farm in the South. I lost my local organic sweet potato source a few years ago so I was thrilled with the yield from the Wood Prairie slips. Texas based Dixondale Farm (877-367-1015 or www.dixondalefarms.com) has a great selection of onions, shallots, and leeks. They help you select the proper variety based on day length: onions come in long, intermediate, and short-day varieties. Intermediates work for

all of Kentucky and the other two can be grown in either the northern or southern extremes. For the harder to find heirloom seeds and all-purpose vegetable garden supplies there are a handful of favorites. And, if you like to cook, these catalogs can help you select vegetables based on how you like to prepare food. It is also fun to find Italian, Spanish, or English varieties of vegetables that maybe our grandmothers used in days gone by. I have grown the English vegetable marrow and Italian Romanesco summer squashes and, of course the Swedish peanut fingerling potato. In our search for fine food to grow in the garden we have fun pouring over the pages of one of my favorites, Pinetree Garden Seeds (888-527-3337, www.superseeds.com). More quality seed can be found at

Johnny's Select Seeds (877-564-6697, www.johnnyseeds.com), John Scheeper's (860-567-6086, www.kitchen-gardenseeds.com) Abundant Life Seeds (541-767-9606, www.abundantlifeseeds.com), Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds (417-924-8917, www.rareseeds.com), Territorial Seed Company (800-626-0866, www.territorialseed.com), and Seeds of Change (888-762-7333, www.seed-sofchange.com). The Cooks Garden (800-457-9703 or www.cooksgarden.com) has the most extensive selection for our kitchen garden. I usually choose a variety of lettuces, 'Kentucky Bibb' for the early garden, specialty mixes for the summer salad, and kale, spinach, and arugula and for the late garden. For heirloom summer annuals, we like the unusual selection

offered by Select Seeds (800-684-0395 or www.selectseeds.com). You'll find old-fashioned sweet peas, violas, nicotiana, morning glories and fast-growing annual vines like the Mexican flame vine, the black-eyed Susan vine and Spanish flag. Gardens Alive (513-354-1482 or www.gardensalive.com) in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, rounds out the list. Gardens Alive was always there for us when we need something organic for the garden and can't find it at home: neem oil, bio fungicides and insecticides, natural fertilizers, weed killers and more. The good thing about these organic products, now, however, is that they are widely available in local garden centers today. That's progress!

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Time 7p.m.
Tuesday, January 27
Tuesday, February 24 (10 a.m)
Tuesday, March 24
Tuesday, April 28
Tuesday, May 26
Tuesday, June 23
July - No Meeting
Tuesday, August 25
Tuesday, September 22
Tuesday, October 27
Tuesday, November 24
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