

## Start Planning Next Year's Garden Now

Winter is here! For most of us gardeners this is a time to reflect on the past season and plan for next year. (We gardeners are certainly incurable optimists, aren't we.)

According to James A. Fizzell, University of Illinois Horticulturist in Cook County there is no better time to look over the many vegetable seed catalogs we have at our fingertips. A good companion publication to have is the University of Illinois list of recommended varieties. Drop a self-addressed, stamped envelope to our office at 4200 West Euclid, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008 and request a copy. If you don't receive any seed catalogs, ask us for a copy of fact sheet entitled "Sources of Vegetable Seeds" for a list of reputable seed companies.

Many of us tend to get carried away when we look at seed catalogs and want to try all the new varieties listed, especially those that show pictures of large luscious vegetables that are, "sure to grow the best in your area."

Here is where the disappointment comes in. Not all vegetable varieties do well in Illinois. Gardeners that select vegetables on the basis of size and color or by a "hit or miss" approach might find that the vegetable variety will not perform as it was advertised due to our tough climate.

In order to "play it safe", it's best to refer to the recommended vegetable varieties fact sheet when looking through the seed catalogs. The varieties listed in this publication have been tested extensively by University of Illinois researchers and many

have some disease resistance or tolerance incorporated in them. These varieties have proven themselves for several years under Illinois growing conditions before they are added to the list. It's a shame to put in your time and money in vegetable gardening, only to find that your efforts have been wasted by varieties that did not live up to your expectations.

On the other hand, do not be afraid to try new varieties on a limited basis too. Several new vegetable varieties have just been released that you might wish to try on an experimental basis. Don't rely on them for your total production in case they don't perform.

The All America Selections are probably the least risky because they have been tested throughout the U.S. and found to be good in all areas. This doesn't mean they are the best in every location, however.

There are three All American Selections, for 1986. Cosmos 'Summer Red' has improved dwarf habit and prolific blooms all season. Good for cutting.

Okra 'Blondy' produces an abundance of spineless pods on a compact plant.

Sweet corn, "How Sweet It Is", is white and has elevated sugars for outstanding gourmet flavor.

If you have room, plan to give these a try along with your favorites.

**James A. Fizzell, Sr. Ext. Adviser  
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