

## GARDEN CATALOGS

Garden Catalogs offer a wider selection of seed varieties than found in most retail and garden centers. Some catalogs now also sell starter plants and grafted plants. To give you an idea of quantities offered, consider that one popular catalog offers over 40 tomato varieties including slicing, canning, paste cherry, and patio tomatoes. Other catalogs offer many varieties of marigolds, zinnias, and petunias. There are catalog that specialize in kitchen gardens, organic seeds and plants, and other catalogs have old fashion, rare or unusual plant varieties. This means the hardest chore is narrowing down your selection.

Most catalogs identify improved varieties, such as those that are more disease resistant, or varieties that have heavier flowering or fruiting. Read catalog descriptions carefully to determine the seed or plant variety's exact characteristics. Depending on the catalog, these descriptions can range from long and floriferous or short and precise. Some catalog provide growing tips, seed life and other information with each plant variety. Many catalogs use symbols after each plant description to signify annual, perennial or biennial, sun exposure and other important information. Look for the key to these symbols in these catalogs to help you decide which plant variety best suits your needs. Garden catalog prose often reflect the character of the company or author, and may be as entertaining as growing the plants.

Contrary to popular belief, mail order seeds may not be cheaper than those in garden centers. Newer varieties may be rather expensive. The quality of seed is often better and it is possible to save money by buying in bulk.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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