

PROMISE IN A PACKET

In the depths of winter, looking through a seed catalog is the gardener's equivalent of planning a summer vacation—a chance to fantasize about warmer days ahead. And the abundance of specialty seed companies means gardeners have a world of plants to try growing, including heirloom

Asian greens and French melons. Our favorite seed companies

(listed on the next page) feed the exploration.

Because these companies often offer rare varieties, you'll want to order

now to get your first choices for spring,

which will be

here sooner

than it

may feel.

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For a few dollars per packet you get armloads of cutting flowers and vegetables.



[GOOD TO KNOW]

GROWING FROM SEED ALLOWS YOU TO TRY A WIDER VARIETY THAN YOU'LL TYPICALLY FIND AS SEEDLINGS AT THE GARDEN CENTER.



BOTANICAL INTERESTS

Extensive growing information on each packet of vegetables, herbs, and flowers sets gardeners up for success. botanicalinterests.com

FLORET

This Washington family farm selects its 200 cutting flowers for their scent and long blooming time. floretflowers.com

FRUITION SEEDS

The focus is on flower, vegetable, and herb seeds that thrive in the cool, short seasons of the Northeast. fruitionseeds.com

HIGH MOWING ORGANIC SEEDS

Almost all the seeds offered are grown on a 40-acre Vermont farm. Try the Garden Starter collection to sample its greatest hits. highmowingseeds.com

KITAZAWA SEED CO.

Expand your palate with unusual Asian vegetables from this century-old seed company. kitazawaseed.com

NATIVE SEEDS

The seed bank offers fruits and vegetables once grown by Native American tribes in the Southwest, including rare varieties of corn, beans, and squash. nativeseeds.org

PEPPER JOE'S

Scrolling through the site's extensive list of fiery peppers can make you reach for a glass of water. (But there are milder ones, too.) pepperjoe.com

RENEE'S GARDEN

Founder Renee Shepherd, who has spent decades testing out seeds, includes new and time-proven veggies and flowers in her collection. reneesgarden.com

ROW 7

The chefs and plant breeders running this company seek to cultivate the most flavorful vegetables possible. row7seeds.com

SEED SAVERS EXCHANGE

In 1975 Diane Ott started Seed Savers to preserve her grandfather's seeds from Bavaria. The bank now has

20,000-plus heirlooms from around the world. seedsavers.org

SEEDS FROM ITALY

Seeds of more than 500 heirloom vegetables, herbs, and flowers come from one of Italy's oldest seed companies. growitalian.com

THOMAS JEFFERSON CENTER FOR HISTORIC PLANTS

This Founding Father was also a voracious gardener (and seed sharer). You can buy seeds of plants he tended in his garden at Monticello in Virginia. monticelloshop.org

SOWING TIMELINE

Your seed-starting schedule is determined by your plants' growth rates and your area's average frost date, which you can find at garden.org.

SOWING INDOORS

8 WEEKS BEFORE LAST FROST

Cabbage, broccoli, eggplant, lettuce, peppers

6 WEEKS BEFORE LAST FROST

Perennial flowers, tomatoes, watermelon

3-4 WEEKS BEFORE LAST FROST

Cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, muskmelon

SOWING OUTDOORS

2-3 WEEKS BEFORE LAST FROST

Lettuce, sweet peas, radishes, carrots, beets, potatoes, peas, onions

2-3 WEEKS AFTER LAST FROST


Basil, cutting flowers, corn, cucumbers, pumpkins, squash

3-4 WEEKS AFTER LAST FROST

All varieties of beans

IF YOUR REGION IS FROST-FREE

Sow lettuce, broccoli, and carrot seeds outdoors in early fall for winter harvest, and tomato, pepper, and cucumber seeds in midwinter for spring harvest. ■



DIG IN This book walks you through everything you can do to help your tiny seeds sprout, including a recipe for a soilless seed-starting mix and instructions for making an indoor growing station. *Starting & Saving Seeds* by Julie Thompson-Adolf, \$25; quartoknows.com

Ready, set, sow Learn more about starting seeds—both indoors and out—at BH&G.com/Seeds.