

Extension Notes

Personal Column for March 2, 2010

By Gary Hall, Iowa State University Regional Extension Education Director

Beware Some Seed Catalogs

Nothing says spring like those annual seed catalogs that come in the mail. Remember, though, to use a little caution before placing that order.

Seed catalogs are a great way to get a jump on the spring gardening season. The selection of seeds and plants are overwhelming since they don't have to worry about showroom space to display all of the seed selections.

One of the most important things to remember when using a seed catalog is to buy from a reputable company. Be sure that the seeds you buy will be the freshest and of the best quality. Ask your gardening friends to determine the best seed companies and find out what companies have the best products.

When selecting seeds, it is important to select those that will grow in your area. Seeds and plants are designated by hardiness zones, indicating in which area of the country and climates they will grow best. North Iowa is typically classified as a zone four. Zone five would be located farther south.

It is important, especially with perennials, to choose those that grow in your zone. The need to pay attention to zones is less important when choosing annual plants, because they only grow in the summer anyway.

When you have purchased your seeds, you are ready to get a jumpstart on the planting season. Planting the seeds inside under good fluorescent lighting will allow the plants to complete 6-8 weeks of growth before they are planted outside in May when the threat of frost is gone. Be sure to check with your Extension office for information on planting dates, crops, and growing transplants.

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