

Plant Wise

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

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What will you plant in your Garden?

It's that time of year to begin focusing on your 2023 garden needs. Catalogs are coming in the mail. But how do you know what's best for you? Here are a few tips of what to look for.



Catalogs come from all over. Look to see where they are from. Have you heard of this company before? How long has it been in business? Look it up and check the reviews. You do not want to buy from a company from another country. The seed packets could be contaminated with seeds of invasive plants. Plus, the fact that your order could take a very long time to arrive. Pick a trusted company. Ask your friends who they have ordered from and if they had bad experiences with any companies.

Know the wording and terms. F1 Hybrid, Hybrid, GM, Open Pollinated, Heirloom, Heritage, Organic, AAS, AGM, VFN - there are many terms to understand and each can give you important clues about whether that variety is best suited for your garden.

- **F1 Hybrid** - A first generation offspring of two purebred strains. An F1 hybrid is generally more vigorous than an ordinary hybrid.
- **Hybrid** - A plant with parents which are genetically distinct. The parent plants may be

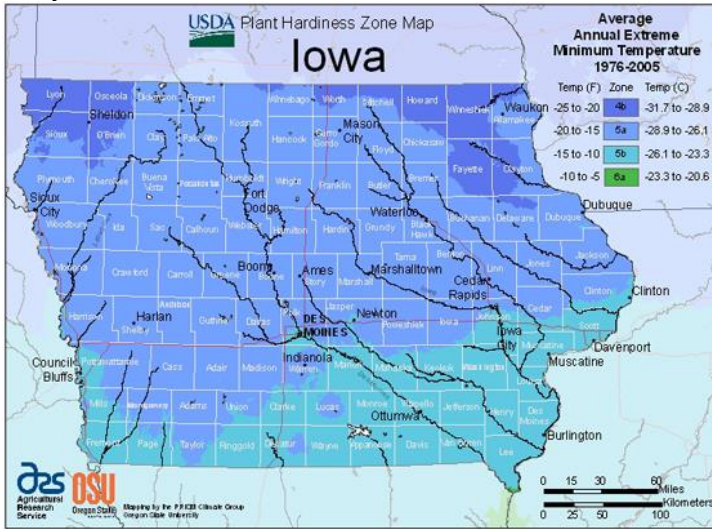
different cultivars, varieties, species or genera but not different families.

- **GM** - Genetically Modified. Created by manipulating the genes of the plants in laboratories
- **Open Pollinated** - Any plant that has been pollinated in the field. In direct contrast to hybrid varieties that will grow true to variety the plants produced will be true to the parents.
- **Heirloom** - Plants that have been around for 50 years or more. Not all people will consider the same plant an heirloom.
- **Heritage** - The cultivars represent native and heritage plants cultivated in America for centuries.
- **Organic** - A chemical or fertilizer which is obtained from a source which is or has been alive. Also the general term used for a type of gardening using no chemical or synthetic fertilizers or pesticides.
- **AAS** - All-America Selections, is the oldest, independent testing organization of flower and edible varieties in North America. Through a rigorous process of garden testing.
- **AGM** - Award of Golden Merit. This award indicates that the seeds or plant is recommended by the **Royal Horticulture Society** and helps gardeners make informed choices.
- **VFN** - Indicates whether or not a plant is resistant to verticillium wilt, fusarium wilt or certain nematodes.

There are hundreds more! If the catalog does not have an abbreviation guide, google the planting abbreviation so you will know what it means.

Choosing. You will have to go with what is best for your needs. Example, tomatoes. Will you be eating fresh tomatoes, canning tomatoes or making paste? There are different varieties that are best for each of these uses. Read the descriptions and compare each to order what works best for you. This is true with peppers as well.

Keeping a journal and garden map will help you to compare varieties you have tried in the past. It is a good idea to take notes during the growing and harvesting season. These notes will help you when you are ready to order and buy seeds and plants in the years to come.



Remember to always check the growing zone and maturity days.

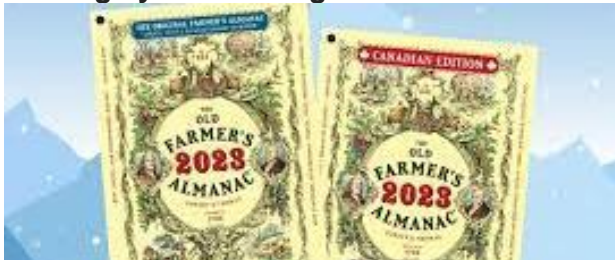
To ensure you are able to get the seeds of your choice, **order early**. Availability may be limited.



Plant Myths and Lore

Do you remember your Grandmother talking about how to do certain things in the garden? The myths and legends? One I have heard was; "You must cut your asparagus. If you break it off instead of cutting, it will cause it to be poisonous." Obviously, this is not true. It's fine either way. When you snap it off, it will break at a natural point, and is quicker than cutting with a knife, which is also ok to do. Here are some other common myths presented with the facts, so you can be the judge.

Planting by the Moonlight and Moon Phases



This one is probably the most well-known of all, especially with many old-time farmers. As it goes, you should plant annual vegetables and flowers that grow above the ground on the days between the new moon and the full moon.

As for root vegetables and perennial flowers, they

should be planted during the dark of night, between the full moon and the new moon. Is it true? With this one, you will find just as many people on both sides of the fence. I know this, we have never planted by the moonlight and somehow, the garden still produces. If you want to know when the new moon and full moon is, look in your Farmers Almanac.

Adding Sugar to the Soil Around Tomatoes to Makes Tomatoes Sweeter



This myth says, if you add a few tablespoons of sugar into the soil around tomato plants, the harvested tomatoes will be sweeter. Unfortunately, this old myth is simply not true. Tomatoes absorb sugars through photosynthesis, not the soil. Although, I guess if you add a little to them once you slice them, it works!

Plant Potatoes On Good Friday



Do a little research and you will find this garden myth everywhere! As the legend goes, always plant your potato crop on Good Friday, and the crop will produce. Many say this practice come from Ireland. Back in the day, when the potato famine was in full force, folks looked for help from above for their potato harvest.

There are some facets of this garden myth that make sense. Potatoes do better when planted in cooler weather. And, generally, Good Friday does fall during the coolest temps of springtime. However, as the Easter calendar moves, so does Good Friday. So, in reality, it much more of a myth than a planting truth.

Plant Marigolds In The Garden



Many old-time gardeners swear by this one! And with good reason, it actually has a lot of merit. Many old-time vegetable gardeners still plant rows of marigolds on the outside edges of their garden. Marigolds naturally repel many garden pests and insects. They simply do not like the smell. And as an added bonus, they add a lot of color to your garden space!

Adding Epsom Salt to Help Tomatoes Grow



This myth has been making the rounds for years, and is one that is often asked about. Here is the low down on the myth – there is a touch of truth, but also a lot of downside to the practice. Epsom salt contains magnesium, which is needed for good growth of tomatoes. Some soils which might lack this mineral can benefit from a bit of Epsom salt. However, adding it to your soil also adds in a lot of salts that over time, will destroy soil structure and leave your soil in bad shape. The better alternative is to simply add compost or worm castings to the soil to add natural nutrients that will help now and in the long term!

Adding Tums when planting Tomatoes Plants to stop Bloom End Rot



Tomatoes often suffer from blossom end rot. The tip of the fruit becomes brown and sunken and the fruit begins to rot. And blossom end rot is known to be caused by a calcium deficiency. And that's why Tums are supposed to come to the rescue, as they are mostly composed of calcium carbonate. Calcium and in a highly soluble.

But that's misunderstanding the situation. Blossom end rot is rarely caused by a lack of calcium in the soil, but rather by a lack of calcium in the plant. Calcium is abundant and available in almost all soils. In fact, it's one of the most abundant elements in soils all over the world. Almost any soil contains more than enough calcium to satisfy a tomato plant. As a result, the average tomato plant has an abundance of calcium in the soil in which it grows: you don't need to add more.

In fact, blossom end rot is really due to the inability of the plant to absorb the calcium present in the soil. This is caused by moisture stress and uneven watering. If the plant lacks water during the critical period of fruit formation, the roots can't absorb all the minerals that are available and therefore what little sap now reaches the fruit will be carrying less calcium than it should. Since the fruit isn't getting sap of the quality it requires, a calcium deficiency occurs ... and blossom end rot sets in.

So, if you water your tomato plants more regularly, thus avoiding moisture stress, the fruits won't suffer from blossom end rot. Applying Tums won't be necessary, nor will using a fertilizer rich in calcium. Just keep the plants evenly moist and all will be fine.

So, if you apply a Tums to the soil at the foot of a tomato plant and you water it, as the garden myth recommends, true enough, that will cure future cases of blossom end rot ... but because you watered, not because of the Tums.

Buried Banana Peels Give Roses a Potassium Boost



Bananas and their peels do contain high levels of potassium, an essential nutrient that roses and all garden plants need for everything from stimulating growth to producing flowers. But burying whole peels can backfire. As soil microorganisms work to break down the peels, they extract significant

amounts of nitrogen from the soil, which results in less nitrogen for greening up plants. The best place for banana peels is in a compost pile, where they can break down alongside other nutrient-rich table scraps. To give plants the balanced nutrition they need, top-dress with compost instead.

Drought-Tolerant Plants Don't Need Watering



Drought-tolerant plants may need less water than other plants, but that doesn't mean you'll never have to pull out your garden hose. If the garden or container soil around your plant is dry, water it. Young plants are especially susceptible to drought because their roots are getting established. Be vigilant about keeping soil slightly moist, but not soggy, throughout a plant's first year, regardless of its reputation for resiliency.

Sprinkling Coffee Grounds Around Acid-Loving Shrubs Lowers the Soil's pH

Coffee grounds are acidic, and mixing them into the soil can affect pH, very slowly. But here's the catch: Fresh coffee grounds can inhibit plant growth because they tie up nitrogen in the soil as they decompose (just like banana peels), especially if large quantities are added. To lower your soil's pH without causing a nitrogen deficiency, purchase a sulfur-based soil acidifier (available at garden centers) and amend soil following the package instructions. Many popular shrubs, including azaleas, heathers, rhododendrons, and blueberries, will appreciate soil with more acidity.

Adding Fertilizer to the Hole Helps Transplants Establish Faster

No fertilizer, or other soil amendments, on hand? No worries. Adding them to a planting hole isn't necessary and, in some cases, can actually discourage a vigorous root system. Nutrient-rich planting holes can give roots less incentive to branch out to absorb nutrients and moisture from the surrounding area; and fertilizers, including the phosphorus-rich fertilizers frequently marketed for new transplants, contain salts, which can burn tender new roots if they're not incorporated into the surrounding soil. If you're concerned about soil fertility, you're better off giving plants a nutrient boost by spreading a 1- to 2-inch layer of compost, then 1 to 2 inches of mulch over the planting site. Just be sure to leave a few inches of breathing

room around each plant's stem, especially when mulching trees. Mounding soil or mulch around a tree trunk can cause girdling roots that encircle the trunk and slowly strangle the plant.

Nothing Grows Near a Black Walnut Tree



While the roots of black walnut do release an allelopathic chemical known as juglone that inhibits the growth of some plants, there are many plants that will grow beneath and near black walnut trees. Examples for landscaping around these trees include tulips, daffodils, Japanese maple, lilac, and flowers such as foxglove, purple coneflower, columbine, coral bells, hostas, begonia and impatiens. Just don't plan on putting a vegetable garden near one.

You Should Paint Tree Wounds After Pruning

This is an old practice that has fallen out of favor. In most cases, it serves no purpose and may actually negatively affect sealing of the wound. However, there are exceptions: If you are pruning a tree that could be threatened by disease-carrying beetles attracted to a fresh wound, tree-wound paint can help. Consider it for oaks and birch trees in particular. Otherwise, watch the time of year you cut and prune trees. It's best done from November through March. If the little black no-see-um (minute pirate bugs) are out and biting, do not trim or prune trees. They carry disease to trees.

Ripen Green Tomatoes on a Sunny Window Sill

Sunlight is not needed. The best place to ripen tomatoes is in a cool basement. Wrap green tomatoes individually in newspaper, which will help contain the ethylene gas that is given off by fruit and hastens ripening.





Honey-Roasted Chicken & Root Vegetables

YIELD: Serves 6 PREP TIME: 25 mins.
 METHOD: Oven 375° TOTAL TIME: 1 hr. 5 min.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh rosemary
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 6 boneless skinless chicken breast halves
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 3 tablespoons honey, divided
- 3 peeled medium sweet potatoes, chopped
- 4 medium peeled carrots, chopped
- 2 medium fennel bulbs, chopped
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 3 bay leaves

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 375°. Combine salt, pepper, rosemary and thyme. In a large skillet, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil and butter over medium-high heat. Sprinkle half the seasoning mixture over chicken breasts. Add to skillet; cook until golden brown, 2-3 minutes per side. Remove and set aside. Add wine and 2 tablespoons honey to pan; cook 2-3 minutes, stirring to loosen browned bits. Combine sweet potatoes, carrots and fennel in a microwave-safe bowl. Add remaining olive oil, seasonings and honey to vegetables and stir. Microwave, covered, until potatoes are just tender, 10 minutes. Transfer to a shallow roasting pan. Add chicken stock, wine mixture and bay leaves; top vegetables with chicken. Roast until a thermometer inserted in chicken reads 165°, 25-30 minutes. Discard bay leaves. Serve with vegetables and sauce.



Do You Remember When?

January days were so short and cold. It was dark by the time you got off the school bus. Being the last ones off it was 4:30. By the time you changed out of your school clothes and put your chore clothes on, the sun was low in the sky. The air was so crisp! Those cold winter sunset skies were amazing, so full of beautiful colors! But it was so cold! You didn't waste any time getting your chores done. As a girl, mine were simple. Make sure the chickens had feed and that the automatic water was ok, then gather the eggs and get them back to the house as quickly as you could. My brother helped Dad with the evening feeding of the fat cattle, by scooping feed into the bushel basket that Dad then lifted onto his shoulder and carried out to the feed bunks, one basket at a time. My parents weren't mean, they were very loving. They were teaching us all about life. You had responsibilities, the farm animals depended on you for shelter, feed and water. And of course Mom or Dad would take care of everything when winter reared up its ugly head in the form of winter storms. The point is that I enjoyed helping my Mom and Dad. Everything we did on the farm during the summer, took care of us in the winter. From the grains and hay we feed them to the straw we put down for their bedding. I loved the livestock. I loved the freedom of the farm. The wide open spaces, nature in all its beauty. We learned to respect life in all forms. From raising livestock, growing the food we fed them, to planting, then harvesting from our home garden. Life was a full circle. It all made sense!

When we were done with chores, homework was next. Then I got to help prepare the evening meal with the wonderful food we had raised and grown. On the farm the meals were breakfast, dinner and supper. To us, lunch was a little snack between dinner and supper. Funny how terms changed over the years. You could tell how and where someone grew up by how they talked about daily life.

For the most part, when not in school, winter days were spent playing the new board games we had gotten for Christmas, or going sledding with our toboggan in the fresh snow down those long pasture hills.

Life was great on the farm! I would not change one single thing about how I grew up! My Brother and I had everything we needed. We were taught all about the beauty of nature, land stewardship, caring for livestock, respect, morals and best of all, the love of family. **Happy Holidays!** ☺



January UP COMMING EVENTS



- **January 1, 2023 – New Years Day**
- **March 25, 2023 – Save the Date** - Mills County Master Gardener “Spring into Spring” garden symposium, Malvern, IA More information to come
- **April 1, 2023 – Save the Date** - West Pottawatomie Spring Garden Conference, Council Bluffs, IA, more information to come
- **April 15, 2023 – Save the date – Master Gardener Class on Campus** Save the date. Open to trainees and Interns from 2022 Master Gardener classes. There will be a \$50 fee. For more information; <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mastergardener/class-campus-ames>
- **June 17 – 22, 2023 – Save the Date - International Master Gardener Conference** – Overland Park Convention Center, Overland Park, Kansas. Registration open. For more information, follow the link <https://imgc2023.com/>
- **Iowa Master Gardener You Tube** – Follow the link below. You will find many ISU educational gardening webinars and videos here for educational hours. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoyB28Aj3qOovjpwNkSiLBg>
- **Mills County Master Gardener Facebook Page** <https://www.facebook.com/MillsCountyMasterGardeners>
- **Iowa Master Gardeners Facebook Page** <https://www.facebook.com/iamastrgardeners/>

January GARDENING TO DO LIST



- **Recycle** your real Christmas tree.
- **Check** all your houseplants for aphids, mealy bugs and insects.
- **Winter** is a good time to repot and divide some houseplants.
- **Routinely** check your root vegetables. Remove any bad or rotting ones.
- **Check** your canned vegetables and fruits. Remove and throw away any that have a bad seal.
- **Check** any flower bulbs that you have stored. Look for and remove any that are rotting.
- **Clean** all your tools and put away for winter.

- **Put an insulated** cover on any outdoor faucets around the outside of the house. If you left garden hoses out, bring them in to thaw
- **Amaryllis bulbs** – bring your bulbs out of storage. Repot and set in warm sunny place. If you bought new, pot up and start them now.
- **Pumpkins & Squash** – Harvested pumpkins, gourds and winter squash should be stored in cool dry place. Check often to check for rot. Remove and throw away any that are bad.
- **Bird Waters & Feeders** – Put a frost free bird water, a heated dog water bowl, a heater in your birdbath a heavy cement birdbath. Do not use a ceramic one as it will break. Clean and hang your winter bird feeders. Put limited amounts of feed in your feeder every day.
- **Onions and Garlic** – check often for rot or growing bulbs. The stouter the onion, the longer it keeps. The sweeter the onion, the shorter time they keep.
- **Apples** – Check your stored apples for rot. One bad apple can spoil the whole lot.

Resources for Horticulture information

Iowa State University Publication

PM 731 [Harvesting and Storing Vegetables](#)
RG 501 [Pruning Raspberries](#)

Horticulture Publications on-line

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/ListCategories>

ISU Hotline Links and Numbers

Hotlines available for all

Iowa Concern 800-447-1985 Financial questions, legal education, stress counseling, crisis/disaster resources and referral (24 hrs - all days)

Beginning Farmer Center 877-BFC-1999 Program to match beginning and retiring farmers (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Teen Line 800-443-8336 Personal and health-related information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

Iowa 2-1-1 211 Resource referral for housing, health, food, family, transportation, employment, education, and legal assistance (24 hrs - all days)

Hot lines available for Iowa Residents Only

AnswerLine Toll-free: 800-262-3804 Local: 515-296-5883 Questions relating to home and family (9 am-noon & 1-4 pm)

Iowa Healthy Families 800-369-2229 Health information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

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Here's to Hot Coco!!