

WHAT SEEDS?

Where to get your seeds

So first things first, where do you get your seeds from? Garden centres and online seed catalogues are the most convenient way to get seeds all year round. Supermarkets sell them in the spring. The variety and quality can vary. Online shopping offers the widest range at competitive prices to give you more control over what you buy.

Buy organic or 'open pollinated' seeds that have not been exposed to chemicals at any part of the process. Below is a list of recommended websites.

What are heritage seeds?

You may have heard of 'heritage seeds', but what are they and why are they so important?

A heritage plant is one that was used a long time ago but now has been supplanted by modern varieties with the industrialisation of agriculture. Before then there was a much wider variety of plants available for people to grow and eat. In modern seed production varieties are produced more for their ability to withstand long distances to supermarkets, visual uniformity or ease to harvest rather than for their flavour or nutrient content. In doing this many heritage varieties are lost.

There are many problems with relying on a small number of uniformed varieties: they don't have the genetic information to adapt and evolve with the environment, to cope with climate change and attacks from pests and diseases. If we do not grow heritage varieties and rely on modern varieties instead, we are in danger of losing a vital part of our food system. They have also often been bred with large doses of chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

Why buy heritage seeds?

So by using heritage seeds in your garden you are helping to preserve beautiful and tasty varieties, You also have a wider choice, eating varieties that are woven into history.

The Heritage Seed Library, based at Ryton Gardens, Warwickshire is doing important work to conserve as many varieties as possible and making them available to the public, the more people growing them the better.

The best thing about using heritage seeds is that you can save the seeds at the end of the growing season and plant them again next year! So try a heritage variety, grow the plant, save the seed and pass some on.

Resources

- www.organiccatalogue.com/catalog/
- www.stormy-hall-seeds.co.uk
- www.realseeds.co.uk
- www.thomasetty.co.uk
- www.magicgardenseeds.com

THREE HERITAGE SEEDS TO TRY:

'Cherokee Trail of Tears' Bean

In 1838 the North American Cherokee people were driven out of their homelands by the US government to make room for European settlers. The forced march was known as 'Trail of Tears'.

This climbing bean is one of their heritage varieties they managed to keep with them and is on the Heritage Seed Library's endangered list.



'Afghan Purple' Carrot

Purple carrots were the norm before the trend for orange came about.

Carrots originated in Afganistan, and were first discovered in the 10th century. It is said that purple carrots were taken to the west, where dutch growers in the 16th century cross-bred purple carrots with mutant yellow ones to create the modern day orange, in honour of William of Orange, or so the story goes...

'Mortgage Lifter' Tomato

This hefty tomato is on the Heritage Seed Library's endangered list.



It was developed by car radiator repair man in 1940. With no plant breeding experience, he created this tomato by cross-breeding four of the largest tomatoes he was able to find. He then sold his tomato plants for \$1 each and paid off a \$6000 mortgage in six years. Weighing up to 3lb each, you certainly get the most out of your money!

How to read a seed packet

Seed packets tell you when and how to sow your seeds, when to plant out and when you can expect to harvest.



www.what-if.info

