



Trowel Talk!

January, 2014

Catalogues of dreams

How valuable are seed and plant catalogues? To me, they're worth their weight in gold as mini-encyclopedias of plant knowledge designed to whet our appetites for a wide variety of horticultural delights. Here are some of the features to look for as you sit in your armchair, pile of catalogues at the ready, and a CD playing "Baby It's Cold Outside".

Catalogues always feature tried and true cultivars because nurseries know that these have both nostalgic and practical value. They also know that variety is the spice of life and so they present us with many new options to consider. All of this is good business for both the gardener and the seed and plant companies.

Along with excellent colour photographs, catalogues provide information about zone preferences, mature height, blooming period and shade/sun tolerance. If, along with your catalogues, and CDs, you also have a blank copy of your yard plan or even specific beds, you can start jotting down ideas as you meander through the pages.

Frequently now, publishers give both the common and the botanical (Latin) name for each plant. This is not horticultural snobbery. It means that you can more reliably identify any plant that you wish to purchase. There are wide differences among cultivars such as size,



Photo by Monique Paré

shape, texture, colour and hardiness. A botanical name can get you what you really need and want.

In recent times, catalogues have begun to provide specialized sections. These sections deal with colour themes, drought resistance, shade tolerance, ground covers, wild flowers, and ornamental grasses. Some are devoted exclusively to roses, fall or spring planted bulbs, vegetables, annuals or shrubs and trees. Some actually provide sample designs with plant recommendations. Closely related to the sample designs are bulk buy offers regarding the plants that have been recommended for each special garden. This can be tremendously helpful for the busy or beginning gardener. More bulk offers are available for those of us who are naturalizing large areas and wish to do so in an economical way. Bonus plants are often available with large purchases and so are gift certificates for gardening friends and relatives. Some companies reduce costs with group purchases. Garden clubs and horticultural societies often arrange such purchases.

Other sections of catalogues advertise general and specialized gar-

dening books and sometimes gardening tools. They may even include kitchen gadgets for processing your bountiful crops of fruit and vegetables come fall.

It is useful to know the meaning of some of the acronyms and symbols that are used in many publications. For example - those little white, black or black and white circles have to do with sun and shade tolerance. "AAS" means All-American Selection winner - plants that have been tested for reliability and overall performance and can make great additions to your favourite regulars. "Heritage" means that the designated plant has a history, often going back to pioneer times.

Catalogues help us to convert our dreams into reality. Ordering is so easy - by fax, phone, regular mail, and e-mail - and we can specify, within reason, when we would like our order to arrive, for example to coincide with a long weekend or days off. As you settle in for the winter, try some serious catalogue browsing, place your orders, and let the visions of gardens 2014 dance in your head!

*Edythe Falconer
Master Gardener*

Trowel Talk!

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Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

January TO DO List

- Check bulbs & tubers that are in cold storage for signs of rot OR if you've used peat moss to store them, check the moisture level of the peat moss and if it is too dry, add a bit of water to moisten it slightly.
- Keep an eye on houseplants for signs of pests. Don't overwater indoor plants as they are semi-dormant now; increase watering when their spring growth begins.
- Plan on trying at least one new perennial or vegetable next season.
- It's too early to start most garden seeds (begonias and geraniums are the exception) but start to gather your supplies so you'll be ready,
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month

Consider placing a seed or plant order with a friend to split shipping costs. Or if you see something unique that you "must have" from multiple suppliers, have your friend place a joint order from one catalogue while you do a joint order from the other supplier. That way you each only pay one shipping fee.

Another idea for sharing is to split the seed packets when they arrive. Often a package will contain more seeds than one household can use. By splitting the packet with a friend you've cut your cost in half.

With proper storage, some seeds will remain viable for a number of years, but sharing the seed packet with friends or garden club colleagues will use them up in their 'best before' year to ensure you always are planting fresh seeds.

Don't restrict yourself to printed catalogues. Most seed suppliers offer online catalogues also. Just make sure to check that they ship to Canada (and what charges will apply) and always confirm the growing zone or the required "length of growing season" of your vegetable selections.

Where to find us this month for free gardening advice!

ONGOING:

Telephone Help Line: 613-236-0034

- Wednesday and Thursday 1-3 pm (all year)

E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca

- monitored daily
- send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID

CLINICS:

No advice clinics until spring.

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

Garden Pests & Diseases - January 16 - 7:30 pm

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener

City View United Church, 6 Epworth Ave., Nepean

Hosted by Nepean Horticultural Society (Guest fee \$4)

Introduction to Organic Vegetable Gardening - February 4 - 7:30 pm

David Hinks, Master Gardener

Old Town Hall, 821 March Road, Kanata

Hosted by Kanata-March Horticultural Society (Guest fee \$5)

Gardening with Children - February 6 - 7:00 pm

Judith Cox, Master Gardener

Greely Community Centre, 1448 Meadow Drive, Greely

Hosted by Greely Gardeners Group (Guest fee \$2)

Making Scents of your Garden - February 12 - 7:30 pm

Judith Cox, Master Gardener

Larkin House, 76 Larkin Drive, Barrhaven

Hosted by Barrhaven Garden Club (Guest fee \$3)

10 Must Grow Culinary Herbs - February 18 - 6:30 pm

Fran Dennett, Master Gardener

Orleans Branch, Ottawa Public Library, 1705 Orleans Blvd, Ottawa

Hosted by the Ottawa Public Library (Registration required - link not active yet)

Lawn Maintenance for the Traditional Lawn plus Some Alternatives - February 20 - 7:30 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

City View United Church, 6 Epworth Avenue, Ottawa

Hosted by Nepean Horticultural Society (Guest fee \$4)

Renovating an Older Garden - February 27 - 7:30 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Rockcliffe Park, Community Centre, 380 Springfield Road, Ottawa

Hosted by Rockcliffe Park Garden Club (Guest fee \$7)

Native Plants for City Gardeners. - March 8 - 1:30 p.m.

Josie Pazdzior, Master Gardener.

Westboro Masonic Hall, 430 Churchill Avenue at Byron, Ottawa

Hosted by the Ottawa Valley Rock Garden & Horticultural Society (Guest fee \$0)

Whispers in the Wind - Ornamental Grasses - March 10 - 7:30 pm

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

RCMP Camp Hall on Nicholl's Island Road, Manotick

Hosted by Manotick Horticultural Society (Guest fee \$5)

Whispers in the Wind - Ornamental Grasses - March 11 - 7:30pm

Old Firehall on Sunnyside Avenue, Ottawa

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

Hosted by Old Ottawa South Garden Club (Guest fee \$7)



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: speakers@mgottawa.mgoi.ca

For more information on Master Gardeners, visit us at: <http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca>