

Unusual vegetables add color to garden

Tomatoes are red, snap beans are green and summer squash is yellow, right? Right — but that's only the beginning.

Tomatoes are also yellow, orange, pink, white and even striped, and it comes in a variety of shapes.

Lee Taylor, Extension horticulture specialist at Michigan State University, says that varieties of common vegetables in uncommon colors are a big feature in this year's seed catalogs.

The latest thing in tomatoes is a red and yellow striped fruit. A number of new orange varieties are also out, along with several yellow fruited varieties and a white one. Another variation on the standard tomato is the stuffing tomato, which looks more like a deep red pepper than a tomato.

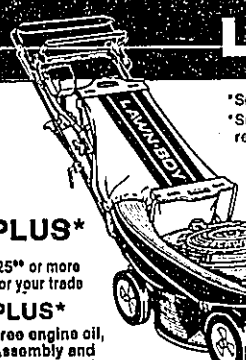
The range of colors in tomatoes is only a little larger than the variety of shapes available. Tomatoes range from thumbnail-sized red or yellow fruits through standard cherry tomatoes to pear-shaped and round fruits, some of which grow to well over a pound each.

Dozens of varieties of green snap beans are available, along with purple-podded ones and golden yellow wax beans. Wide, flat Italian beans are typically green but interesting because of their shape, Taylor notes.

The proliferation of summer squash varieties in recent years has been almost as great as the productivity of these vigorous plants. Zucchini varieties now range in color from very dark green to golden yellow. Yellow squash come in the familiar crookneck shape as well as straightneck forms. Scallop-type squash range in color from white through light green to dark green to golden yellow. And a number of other types, such as the green and cream striped Gourmet Globe, offer more variety.

Among the cole crops, you can choose from purple broccoli and cauliflower, red cabbage and white broccoli. Other novelty vegetables include yellow-fleshed watermelon, red okra, purplish-red lettuce and white eggplant.

"Some of these odd-colored vegetables may have appeal primarily as novelty items," Taylor says. "Others may become favorites because they have good flavor, high yields, disease resistance or other characteristics that you desire. For instance, you may decide you like raising purple cauliflower because you don't have to wrap the leaves around the heads to blanch them. In any case, these unusual vegetables can add a bit of unexpected color to the garden and the harvest."



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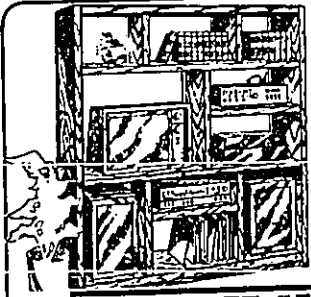
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