

Suburban Gardener

Seed Packets Reveal
Fantastic Vegetables

By BETTY FRANKEL
Seeds in brightly colored packets, prominently displayed in grocery, hardware and nursery stores, are an inspiration and a temptation to the gardener.

Spin the rack and visions of a truly fantastic garden unfold. Flourishing in it are golden beets and black radishes, red lettuce and rainbow corn, giant radishes and tom-thumb lettuce.

Temptations include seeds for Jack's Bean Stalk, plant 15-

pound radishes, and vegetable spaghetti.

An inspection of the seed packet of Jack's Bean Stalk reveals that it is otherwise known as "kudzu vine." This plant is well-known in the southern part of our country where it has been planted for erosion control, as a decorative plant, and as a fodder crop.

In some areas it has "gone wild" and can be seen climbing over trees, creating a spreading curtain of greenery. Under favorable conditions it grows 40 to 60 feet in a season.

IN THE SOUTH the vine remains green all year, but in our area it would behave like other herbaceous perennials, with the top dying back each winter and sprouting again from the roots the following spring. It has three-parted leaves and violet pea-like flowers. The fleshy, tuberous roots are also used for food and as a source of starch.

The spaghetti plant is a type of squash that is filled with a white fibrous pulp. When the ripe squash is boiled and the pulp scooped out, it makes a low-calorie substitute for spaghetti that can be eaten plain or with the traditional tomato sauce.

Another interesting squash is the Turban, which has a form like a wrapped turban eight to 10 inches in diameter, striped and spotted with scarlet, orange, cream white and green. It is edible, but is also grown for its decorative appeal. It can be hollowed out and used as a container for autumn flower arrangements and will last several months.

THE GIANT radish, called Sakurajima, can reach 15 pounds in weight, according to the packet information, but the average size is nine inches long and three inches in diameter. Still some radish!

Other tempting giants include a 12-pound Hubbard squash, a two-pound Big Boy Giant Hybrid tomato, and the "Big Ma" pumpkin with an average weight of 100 pounds.

If dwarfs are more to your liking than giants, there's a whole spectrum of midsize vegetables available. These take less growing space than their larger counterparts, generally mature earlier and are just as tasty.

Best known are the "Tiny Tim" and cherry tomatoes which can even be grown in pots in the house or on the patio. Also available is midsize corn with four inch ears. The plants grow only two to three feet tall. There's a white variety and a golden yellow variety. They are recommended for freezing on the cob as well as fresh for table use.

Landscape
Competition
At Forum

James A. Fowler, director of education at the Edison Institute and chairman of the Greenfield Village Clara B. Ford Garden Forum, has announced the addition of a new feature to this year's forum.

Students of Michigan State University's School of Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture have been invited to enter a residence landscape design competition with cash awards to be presented at the closing forum banquet April 24.

The designs, which will be on display throughout the forum April 22, 23 and 24 in the Henry Ford Museum, will be based on a landscaping problem developed by the school's faculty. The entries must consider problems of soil type, existing trees, architectural style, lot size and contour and the size and economic status of the family.

The designs will be judged on how well they meet these problems as well as on the originality, creativity and beauty of the finished product. The jury will be made up of a panel of professional and laymen to be announced.

ACCORDING TO Mr. Fowler, Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum is enthusiastic about this opportunity to involve young adults in the garden forum. "It is particularly appropriate this year," he said, "since the forum theme is 'Plants and Gardens: A Livable Environment,' and our roster of eight outstanding speakers will be examining the questions of ecology in which the youth of today is vitally interested."

TOM THUMB lettuce produces little heads that are just the right size for individual salad servings. Little Leaguer cabbage yields heads the size of softballs that can be cooked whole. They are also good for cole slaw.

There are also midget watermelons, midget squash, tiny carrots, and miniature cucumbers.

Other novelties that might add zest to the table and interest to the garden include edible soybeans, peanuts, edible potted peas and scarlet runner bean. The latter is a quick-growing decorative vine with clusters of beautiful red flowers and edible bean pods.

Try some novelties that are pink, yellow or orange rather than the usual red. Try white radishes, cylindrical beets and golden beets. The latter is a 1950 Burgess Seed Co. introduction with mid-lasting golden flesh and bright green tops that can be cooked like spinach.

By all means consider the exotic offerings and try something new — just for fun, but don't forget to save most of the garden space for the tried and true tomato, lettuce, and true tomato, lettuce.



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