

Shopping for Plants and Seeds

When ordering seeds, keep in mind some general guides. Order only enough seeds for your needs. Otherwise, you will be faced with entirely too many plants or with storing the unused seeds. Ordering just what you can use and handle is one of the toughest problems most gardeners face this time of year.

First figure how many plants you will need. Then consult the catalog description to find the percent germination and how many seeds per packet. The germination is important, if the packet has enough seeds, but the germination is low, you'll want to order more. Some packets such as geraniums may only contain 5 seeds, as they are quite choice and harder to produce. Others may contain hundreds of seeds and be enough for several years!

When ordering seeds, consider the All-America Selections. These are new introductions that have been judged best by horticulture professionals nationwide. These selections are one reason to start your own plants, as many are quite good and can not be found at many garden stores or greenhouses. You can learn more about this program online at www.all-americaelections.org.

Catalogs and online Web sites, may also be used for ordering plants that



arrive in the mail later in the spring. This is a good way to find many new and unusual perennial plants that may not be available locally. This is especially true if you are interested in a certain genus, group or niche of plants such as hostas or aquatic plants. If you have large garden centers and specialty nurseries in your area, you may wish to check their listings first before ordering from catalogs. Be sure to ask if the plants have a guarantee.

When ordering plants there are important points to remember. Order from reliable sources in order to get good value and plants that are shipped properly. Such sources are ones you may have used before or heard recommended by friends and neighbors. Beware of inexpensive plants. Price is often a good indication of quality and lower prices often reflect poor quality. These plants seldom resemble those in the catalog and they often die.

Source: Dr. Leonard Perry, Vermont Extension Professor

2009 All-America Rose Selections

Carefree Spirit

Recognizing consumers want roses that are easy to care for, in 2004, the All-America Rose Selections (AARS) stopped spraying fungicides on all shrub roses in its nationwide test gardens. Carefree Spirit is the first and only landscape shrub, to date, to endure this real-world testing and prevail as a Winner. This mounding rose produces deep red blossoms with white twinkles in their eyes. The blooms finish up pink as they bask in the full sun. Carefree Spirit amplifies the disease resistance associated with its carefree lineage, with more than 10 years of hybridization improvement. Much like its parent rose, Carefree Delight, which was a All-America Rose Selections Winner in 1996, the petals are beautifully set amongst abundant glossy, dark green foliage. This plant has even better disease resistance, habit and blooming power and will perform well in any area of the country.



Carefree Spirit

Cinco de Mayo

Cinco de Mayo brings fiesta of flowers to every garden. Mysteriously colored and deliriously beautiful, it is a wonderful blending of smoked lavender and rusty, red-orange. This festive rose may be impossible to describe but you will love the endless bounty of multi-colored clusters sitting amongst glossy, green foliage and dark red new growth. The flowers, which hold well and are fast to repeat and radiate the smell of fresh-cut golden apples. As an AARS Winner, this floribunda has fantastic disease resistance and has performed exceptionally well across the country with little-to-no care. As the offspring of the 2006 AARS award-winning Julia Child rose, Cinco de Mayo enlivens any garden and it's clean, round habit is ideal for use as a hedge or in a border with mixed perennials.



Cinco de Mayo

Pink Promise

Pink Promise, is a graceful bloomer with long stems for cutting. The National Breast Cancer Foundation selected this rose to officially represent a continual blooming promise of compassion and awareness. For every Pink Promise plant purchased, a percentage of the sales will be donated to the National Breast Cancer Foundation to help extend women's lives through education and early detection. This



Pink Promise

hybrid tea's beauty is enhanced by the contrast of its large pink blossoms set against lush dark green foliage. Along with its stunning appearance, Pink Promise has good disease resistance and flourishes even in cooler climates. A highly fragrant rose, Pink Promise fills any room with a deliciously fruity scent.

Source: All-America Rose Selections

Birds Need Water In Winter

Water in a birdbath, small backyard pool or pond attracts birds and supplies water needed for drinking and bathing. During the winter birds may get some water from snow, but snowmelt is chilling. Heated birdbaths especially can be important to birds during winter months when little unfrozen moisture is available.

Choose a birdbath that isn't too deep. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the best birdbaths mimic rain puddles—shallow and with gradually sloping sides. This makes it easy for birds to wade into the water. A maximum depth of no more than two inches is ideal. Look for a birdbath made of tough plastic so it won't crack and is easy to clean. Also, remember to keep the birdbath clean and the water fresh.

Birds seem to prefer birdbaths placed at ground level, but if you are concerned about neighborhood cats,

raise the bath 2 to 3 feet above the ground. Place clean sand or gravel in the bottom of the basin to give birds sure footing. Arrange a few perches in the birdbath, using small branches or stones. These give birds a place to perch and drink without getting wet and especially are important during winter.

If possible, place the birdbath near trees or shrubs, giving birds a place to hide if predators show up. Birds with feathers wet from bathing don't fly well, so woody shrubs offer a place to sit and preen until their feathers dry off.


Heated birdbaths come in a variety of styles, including those on pedestal bases and some attach to deck or porch railings. Each has a built-in heating element that is thermostatically controlled to keep the water temperature above freezing. Heated pedestal birdbaths have an extension cord running up out of sight through the center

of the pedestal, while mounted birdbaths have the cord tucked under the bowl.

Removable, immersion heaters can be added to existing, unheated birdbaths to keep the water from freezing. Another alternative would be to place a light bulb in a flowerpot beneath an unheated birdbath. This will provide more than enough heat to keep the water from freezing.

Finally, the sight and sound of moving water is irresistible to many birds. Birdbath drippers are a new innovation meant to attract even more birds. Commercial drippers or sprayers are available or can be homemade. Simply punch a small hole in a plastic container, such as a liter soda bottle and hang it so the water drips into the birdbath.

Source: Sarah Browning, UNL Extension Educator



Garden Guide

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

By Mary Jane Frogge, UNL Extension Associate

- Brush snow from evergreens as soon as possible after a storm. Use a broom in an upward, sweeping motion. Serious damage may be caused by heavy snow or ice accumulating on the branches.
- Check young trees and shrubs for rodent or rabbit damage. Prevent injury with fencing or protective collars.
- Use sand instead of salt for icy spots on the sidewalk.
- Avoid heavy traffic on the frozen, dormant lawn. The crown of the plant may be severely damaged or killed.
- Do not wait until late in the winter to order seeds. Many varieties sell out early.
- Add garden record keeping to the list of New Year's resolutions. Make a note of which varieties of flowers and vegetables do best and which do poorly in your garden.
- Feed the birds regularly and see they have water. Birds like suet, fruit, nuts and bread crumbs as well as bird seed.
- Review your vegetable garden plans. Perhaps a smaller garden with fewer weeds and insects will give you more produce.
- When reviewing your garden catalogs for new vegetable varieties to try, an important consideration is improved insect and/or disease resistance. Watch for drought-tolerant types.
- Analyze last year's planting, fertilizing and spraying records. Make notes to reorder successful varieties as well as those you wish to try again.
- Check stored fruits and vegetables such as potatoes and apples for bad spots which may lead to decay. Remove and use those which show signs of spoiling. Separate others into slotted trays or bins to increase air circulation and reduce decay possibilities.
- To prolong bloom, protect poinsettias from drafts and keep them moderately moist.
- Turn and prune houseplants regularly to keep them shapely. Pinch back new growth to promote bushy plants.
- Houseplants and holiday gift plants should not be placed on top of the television. This location is too warm and in most homes too far from windows to provide adequate light.
- Houseplants with large leaves and smooth foliage, such as philodendrons, dracaena and rubber plant benefit if their leaves are washed at intervals to remove dust and grime, helping keep the leaf pores open.
- If you have some time this winter, paint the handles of garden tools red or orange. This will preserve the wood and make the tools easier to locate next summer when you lay them down in the garden or on the lawn.