

NORTHWOODS YARD & GARDEN

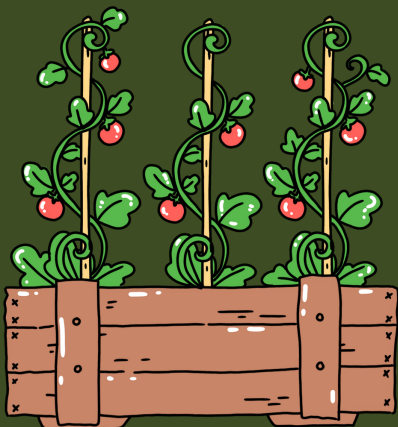
Weekly Column

January 8, 2024

Successful Vegetable Gardens Start Now

While we are just getting into the heart of winter, it is not too early to think of growing your own vegetables in 2024. Gardening catalogs will be available in the coming weeks. Now is the perfect time to research varieties or cultivars of vegetables you intend to grow later this year.

Cultivars and varieties are genetic differences within a species, but still the same species, and are significant in all areas of horticulture. Cultivars are technically human created through crop breeding and plant propagation techniques; while varieties are natural variations that occur. The two terms refer to the same thing. Genetic differences that exist may be visible traits, such as flower or fruit color; or not readily visible traits, such as cold hardiness or disease resistance.



This is where the importance of carefully choosing vegetables for your 2024 garden comes into focus. Disease resistant cultivars (varieties) are the best single defense against major diseases of vegetable crops. Using disease-resistant plants, although not actually immune to disease, will drastically increase your chances of successful crops even under conditions favorable for disease. Add crop rotation to your plan to make them even more effective. The textbook gardening example is tomatoes. Two major soil-borne fungal diseases are verticillium and fusarium wilt. Both can kill the entire plant and once the plant is infected, nothing will stop them. The disease management starts with plant selection, as there are verticillium (V) and fusarium (F) resistant tomatoes. Look for VF resistance when choosing tomatoes in catalogs or in the garden center this spring. Add root-knot nematode (N) to the list, and VFN tomatoes are the route to go.

Another major group of diseases best managed through resistant plants are viruses, specifically mosaic viruses in vegetables. Viruses cause stunted and deformed plants with reduced yields and often spread through the crop planting by insects. Look for mosaic resistance in crops like beans, cucumbers, and peppers.

Research all the crops you plant to grow to see what disease concerns exist and what resistant cultivars or varieties are available. Now is the time to plan for bountiful harvests in 2024! Cultivar selection is the first step of that process.

Interested in learning more about
Horticulture in Iron County?
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