

# Browsing the Catalogs

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At this time of year I'm not doing much in the garden so it's a good time to shop for seeds and plants. The following are the catalogs or retail outlets I personally use – this is not an official endorsement from Master Gardeners.

For lettuces and most other vegetables The Cooks Garden catalogue out of Pennsylvania is one of my favorites. Burpee's and Park Seeds also feature vegetables, but The Cooks Garden selection is a gourmet one. Seeds of Change is a good source for organic vegetable seed. For transplants, Alameda Greenhouses has the best local selection.

My tomato seeds come from Master Gardeners that save seed. I start several heirloom varieties and I grow more than I need. I give my extra transplants to Master Gardeners to sell at the Garden Center Spring Fair, the last Saturday in April. The original source for most of these seeds was Totally Tomatoes or Tomato Growers. My favorite eating varieties are the cherry sized tomato Sungold, anything black like Black Krim or Purple Cherokee, and for cooking, San Marzano paste tomatoes. Last year I tried Snow White which was a white cherry size tomato that I thought tasted good. I bought Tangerine too, but it wasn't productive. That doesn't mean I won't try it again since every year what is productive and what is not is different. The hybrid, Celebrity, is my fallback tomato variety because it hardly ever fails to give you at least a few good tomatoes and the size is good for salads.

For berries, Indiana Berry or Nourse are good sources. For fruit trees, Tooley Trees in Truchas or Stark Brothers in Missouri are good sources. Selection of the right variety is especially important for success in New Mexico. There are some recommended varieties from the Los Lunas Research Station in the latest edition (4<sup>th</sup>) of Down to Earth: A Gardener's Guide to the Albuquerque Area. This is the book put out by local Master Gardeners. The book also has a vegetable planting/harvesting chart for Albuquerque.

For bulbs, High Country Gardens retail or catalog or McClure & Zimmerman catalog are recommended sources. The latter has the best selection, but you have to know your bulbs. The former selects bulbs that do well here so you don't have to know as much for success.

Good local sources of herb seeds are Plants of the Southwest and Seeds of Change (may have moved from Santa Fe). Botanical Interests also is a favorite seed source for me. Some herbs are hard to germinate so Plants of the Southwest is a good source of transplants. They also have grass seed mixes for meadows and lawns.

For landscaping and especially xeric plants I like the Garden Center Spring Fair or retail nurseries: Plants of the Southwest, Great Outdoors around 2<sup>nd</sup> and Tramway, High Country Gardens' retail store, and Santa Ana Nursery in Bernalillo. All of these locations have staff that is qualified to answer questions about the stock.

The best place to purchase cacti, yuccas, and agaves is at the NM Cactus and Succulent Society sale, in April. If you'd like to try some from seed, order online from Mesa Gardens in Belen. I buy my cactus at

the sale because they have someone I can talk with about the ones that work best and which ones are cold hardy here. Never purchase cactus from roadside vendors as they may have dug them up illegally.

Other plants like daylilies, iris, roses, orchids, etc. can be purchased at the local plant society sales. For example, I buy daylilies from the Albuquerque Daylily Society at their sales. Contact the Garden Center for the dates of the plant society sales, view the calendar pdf on the Garden Center website, or look for the plant society web sites.

I like two sources for garden tools and equipment – Gardeners Supply in Vermont and Lee Valley in New York. If you're an organic gardener, a great organic source of seed, amendments, and pesticides is Peaceful Valley in California.

And I do buy plants from Lowes and Home Depot, but only the ones that everyone carries like dwarf plumbago, snow-in-summer, and some lavender. The warehouse stores offer too many plants for sale that aren't appropriate for our climate.

So now I'm really looking forward to spring and it's way too early to buy anything but seed. I'll just have to browse catalogs and be patient for planting outside.