

# Packets of Promise Tonya Judd, M.H.

It's that wonderful time of the year when those beautiful seed catalogs come rolling into our mail boxes and inboxes. I love poring over pages and pages of possibilities!

Why would you grow your own food from seed when you can more easily buy your vegetables from the store or local farmers market? Food is medicine and food that you grow yourself is even better medicine! You know what it was grown in, how it was grown and there is power and freedom in producing your own food with an added connection that you can't obtain otherwise. You can't get closer to "eating under your own fig tree" than this. Starting your own seeds allows you to plant the varieties you like instead of being limited to what's available in your local nursery.

With all the possibilities, it can be difficult to decide just what to plant. Before you decide to buy one of every variety of seed available, figure out how much available growing space you have and what your growing zone is. There are many links online that can help you find what your growing zone is or you can also call your local county extension office.

When looking for good quality seeds, look for organic, open pollinated seeds. Open pollinated seeds allow you to save seeds from your plants and use those seeds to start plants the next year.

How do you decide which variety you should try? Here are a few tips: Seed companies that specialize in heirloom varieties and that save and grow seeds to preserve these vegetables have tested and tried the varieties that they sell. Pay close attention to the wording in the description box. Right now in one of my seed catalogs there are 9 full pages of different tomato varieties. What I look for when I am shopping for new varieties are words like, "delicious, excellent tomato flavor, or incredibly rich, delightfully intense tomato flavor." (SSE). Other important information on the seed packets and in the catalog will tell you how many days it will take for the plants to produce fully ripe fruit or vegetables.



The following are companies that sell quality vegetable and herb seeds. This is not an exhaustive list and all opinions are my own. I personally have ordered from several of these companies and highly recommend those that I have tried.

[www.seedsavers.org](http://www.seedsavers.org)

[www.johnnyseeds.com](http://www.johnnyseeds.com)

[www.groworganic.com](http://www.groworganic.com)

[www.seedsofchange.com](http://www.seedsofchange.com)  
<https://www.highmowingseeds.com/>  
[www.rareseeds.com](http://www.rareseeds.com)

If you would prefer to buy plants for your garden be sure to ask questions to ensure you are obtaining the best plants possible. Often farmer's markets have plant starts that are organically grown, open pollinated and often offer heirloom varieties as well. Another option that I personally love is Sarah's Starts. These plants can be ordered through [www.azurestandard.com](http://www.azurestandard.com). These are the most beautiful plants I have ever ordered.

If you are looking for high quality herb seeds, [www.strictlymedicalseeds.com](http://www.strictlymedicalseeds.com) is a wonderful resource. I have ordered seeds and plants from them and have had great results.

Each seed packet will have information on the back that will tell you how many weeks before your last frost date to start that particular seed. If you don't know when the last frost date is for your area you can contact your county extension office or refer to the Farmer's Almanac (this is accessible online as well as in booklet form). For example, the last frost date for my area is April 20th. According to this information, right now is the perfect time for me to start the following seeds indoors: peas, peppers, tomatoes, broccoli, kale, cabbage and lettuce.

Storing seeds: When you have completed your planting for this season, tape your seed packets closed and place them in plastic or glass jars with lids. Empty canning jars work great for this or any empty plastic jar with a tight fitting lid. Label and place these in the freezer. When I learned about the Svalbard Global Seed Vault and that they stored their seeds in a giant freezer (massive understatement here), and when this idea was verified by an amazing gardener, I knew that was the best way to store my own seeds. It has worked amazingly well for me for many years. If you don't have the freezer space, keep your seeds in a cool, dark place, in an airtight jar or container.

Don't forget to sow some flower seeds as well when you are starting your vegetable seeds, flowers are food for the soul! Happy planting!

***Tonya Judd is a Master Herbalist graduate of the School of Natural Healing.***