

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 12-10-03) "Catalogs and Websites" , ©2005

Cold, rainy days are perfect for staying inside, pouring through gardening catalogs and visiting websites. Many of the gardening catalogs are true keepers offering up lore, recipes and helpful tips. Luckily for us gardeners, most catalogs are still free. Many resources for seeds and plants are online and you won't even have to order a catalog, just return to the sites as needed.

Nichols Garden Nursery has been "serving home gardeners for more than 50 years." Their toll free number is 1-800-422-3985 and the website is www.nicholsgardennursery.com. Rose Marie Nichols McGee and her husband Keane McGee operate their nursery in the Willamette Valley. Rose Marie has written and co-authored several books, also available in the catalog. Our local nurseries and garden centers carry Nichols Garden Seeds. You'll want to check out this resource for herbs, vegetables, books, equipment, grass seed and flowers.

Territorial Seed Company's catalog is always packed with abundant information for growing plants in the Pacific Northwest. A few of the new varieties for 2004 are: Purple Glazer Garlic, Bulgarian Carrot Pepper Trailing Plum Coleus, Sucrine Lettuce, and Escargot Begonia. Their phone number is 541-942-9547 and the website is www.territorialseed.com. Territorial is also in the Willamette Valley in Oregon. Their seeds are also sold locally in our nurseries and garden centers. One of these days I want to drive down I-5 to visit both Territorial and Nichols.

February and March (potato planting months) will arrive before we know it. Ronnigers is a great resource for seed potatoes. Visit their website at www.Ronnigers.com or call 208-267-7938 to request a catalog. This family-run business was resting for a few years but they're back in business with many varieties to tempt home gardeners. They also sell Haflinger ponies. The website is packed full of useful information about both the ponies and potatoes. Any question you can imagine about growing potatoes is answered on the Ronnigers website and in their catalog.

Visit www.heirloomtomatoes.bizland.com to explore hundreds of varieties of heirloom tomatoes. The website has a "tomato growers club" where you can enroll and receive a free email subscription to "Heirloom Tomato Grower Newsletter" and receive free seeds to evaluate with your first order. Tomatoes are very easy to grow from seed, but be careful, you'll have enough to share with every one of your neighbors.

Want garlic? Try www.filareefarm.com in Okanogen, Washington. You can contact them directly via email at filaree@northcascades.net or phone 509-422-6940. Filaree Farm offers over 100 strains of seed garlic. If you're not sure which varieties to plant Filaree will send you a variety pack selected for your particular climate and soil. Prices for variety packs range from nine dollars to thirty-two dollars. The website explains the differences and advantages of growing both hard neck and soft neck garlic varieties.

Many gardeners in Kitsap County are intrigued by exotic and/or tropical plants. If you're intrigued too, search out www.exoticfruit.com the website for Oregon Exotics Nursery in Grants Pass, Oregon. Their phone number is 541-846-7578. Two varieties that intrigued me are the edible bamboos and subzero citrus.

For a veritable encyclopedia of catalog offerings visit Cyndi Johnson's website at www.qnet.com/~johnsonj/ for thousands of sites to visit. If you can think of a topic or plant to explore, she's got a list of nurseries and catalogues for you.

If perennials are your passion you'll want to check out two sites. The Perennial Plant Association at www.perennialplant.org is dedicated to improving the perennial plant industry. You'll find their choices since 1990 at the site. Their plant pick for this year is *Athyrium niponicum* 'Pictum' commonly known as Painted Fern. Each year the association picks a plant to feature for the year. Painted Fern is an easy care fern with wonderful foliage in shades of silver-gray with hints of red and blue. It prefers partial to full shade. Our local nurseries carry this wonderful easy to grow treasure.

The Elizabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden has amassed a panel of plant experts who select "Great Plant Picks" for Pacific Northwest gardens each year. Eric Hammond from Heronswood is on the perennial evaluation team. Great Plant Picks satisfy criteria for great success in "Zones 7 and 8." A few of their attributes are ease of growth, vigorous characteristics and long-season interest. Visit www.greatplantpicks.org for a complete photo library, the evaluations, nursery directory and all the picks so far for several years.

Contact Peg with questions or comments in care of this newspaper or email gardenmentor@yahoo.com or ptillery@co.kitsap.wa.us