

DIG THIS by Peg Tillery (for 01-26-05) Start Planting those Vegetables © 2005

Believe it or not spring is fast approaching! Get ready to plant. My mailbox has produced the following growing temptations.

Roningers Potato Farm in Moyie Springs Idaho offers a compact little forty-five-page booklet (the bible of potatoes). Check out [www.roningers.com](http://www.roningers.com). Choose from “the largest selection of certified disease free and organically grown seed potato varieties in the United States.” Call 208-267-7938 or email [smallpotatoes@roningers.com](mailto:smallpotatoes@roningers.com). You’ll find 110 new, heirloom, European, Peruvian and Fingerling potato varieties available in small packages for the home gardener or in bulk quantities if you really want to grow acres of potatoes. New for 2005 is Amandine (a fingerling, golden almond shaped, creamy fleshed and really easy to grow); Anoka (winner of the Rodale Organic Gardening “Taste Off”); Alaska Sweetheart (bred in Alaska, brilliant red skin and pink flesh, great for mashed potatoes); Red Pearl (great for early new potatoes, keep robbing the cherry clusters while waiting for larger potatoes to develop); and Garnet Chili (an 1853 Heirloom parent to many cultivars, rare and unusual).

Ed Hume Seeds introduces seven new “certified organic seed” varieties. “Washington State Certification” means all of the varieties have been grown organically without the use of chemicals or pesticides of any kind. The other Ed Hume seeds are chemical and pesticide free but these particular seven seed selections meet the stringent organic certification requirements. You’ll want to try: ‘Italian Large Leaf’ basil, great to use fresh or dried; ‘Red Core Chantenay’ carrot, five to seven inches long, smooth and moderately tapered with 70 days to maturity; ‘Straight Eight’ cucumber, eight inches long and straight (just like the name), matures and bears abundantly in 65 days; ‘Garnet Oakleaf’ lettuce, somewhat heat resistant with burgundy tinged leaves, darkening as they mature in 50 days; ‘Icicle’ radish, long, white and five to five and a half inches long, maturing in 27 days; ‘Black Beauty’ bush zucchini squash, dark green, glossy and tapered on each end with 50 days to harvest; and ‘Mammoth Grey Stripe’ sunflower, growing six to twelve feet tall or more with humongous seed heads. Visit [www.humeseeds.com](http://www.humeseeds.com) to order your seeds or search our local stores. Or call 1-800-383-4863 for information.

Raintree Nursery is in Morton, Washington. They’re one of our best resources for growing every kind of fruit in the Northwest. Visit [www.RaintreeNursery.com](http://www.RaintreeNursery.com) or phone 360-496-6400 and request a catalogue. If you’ve always wanted to grow fruit trees but don’t have the space Raintree has many choices for containers. You’ll even find raspberries and well-behaved blackberries to grow in pots on the deck. Check out ‘Sunshine Blue’ an evergreen blueberry bush growing to four feet, ideal for hedging and ripening from early August through September. The flowers are hot pink in the spring. It would make a great hedge.

Last but not least Nichols Garden Nursery has abundant temptations for spring planting. Visit [www.nicholsgardennursery.com](http://www.nicholsgardennursery.com) or call 1-800-422-3985 and order a catalogue. Among the 50 new items offered you’ll find ‘Momotaro Tomato’ the most popular tomato in Japan; Nichols organic mesclun “The Eclectic Eleven” composed of:

Red Deer Tongue Lettuce, Green Salad Bowl Lettuce, Red Giant Mustard, Green Black Seeded Simpson Lettuce, Rouge De Hiver Lettuce, Green Early Mizuma, Wild Red Kale, Green Tres Fines Endive, Green Tendergreen Mustard, Red Oak Leaf Lettuce and Wrinkled Crinkled Crumpled Cress. Nichols is now offering teas and bulk herbs for cooking, concocting and sipping. The selection includes: bulk saffron, house blends of tea, *Camellia sinensis*, and Vanilla Cinnamon Rooibos tea. Two tea bags came in my mailing and they were heavenly, tasting even better than they smelled.