



Seed ordering made simple

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Too many seeds to choose from! When I look at a typical commercial seed catalog, with its [16 varieties of carrots](#) [1], my brain wilts. Maybe this doesn't happen to you. More experienced vegetable gardeners, I'm given to understand, know which varieties work best for them and use the same ones, in the same quantities, from year to year. But for this duffer, too much choice = meltdown. Many years, I spend hours filling in seed catalog order forms but never actually get around to placing the order. Instead I end up planting seed packets purchased two or three at a time, according to no plan whatever.

And I'm not the only one who does this sort of thing. [Researchers have found](#) [2] [3] that consumers actually are *put off* by too many choices. They tend to buy more when presented with fewer choices. Give them too many options, and they are more likely to walk away without buying anything.

[This year I don't have much free time and want to make vegetable gardening as easy as possible.](#) [4] So step number one, I decided, would be to limit my seed choices. Here's how I'm going about it.

First pick a plan

This year there will be no sitting around for hours with mugs of coffee, freshly sharpened pencil, seed catalogs, and pad of paper covered in blue gridlines. I love the ritual, love the office supplies ... but it takes hours--and most of the time, I never actually get around to installing the garden I've so painstakingly planned.

This year, I chose a plan out of [a favorite magazine](#) [5]. This gave me a pre-made list of vegetables types, plus quantities. For instance, the plan specifies one package of carrot seeds, so that's what I'll get. We will not re-run the year when, in the name of research, I bought and planted one package of practically every carrot in the catalog ... only to have my cheap plant markers fade in the sun ... which left me to guess which carrots had done well and which had not.

Next choose a small, virtuous seed supplier

Virtuous means someone who is growing and collecting seed in an environmentally friendly way. Why choose a virtuous supplier? Well, above all for the Virtue Points, of course. We all want those. But also because small, virtuous suppliers often have a limited selection of seeds. This will limit the choices available to you, making it easier to make your selections.

I chose [Hope Seeds](#) [6], a small company in the next-door province of New Brunswick. (They will send seeds all over Canada and the United States.) Not only are their seeds certified organic, sustainably grown, and open pollinated, but for most vegetables they also have the perfect "Goldilocks" amount of choice: not too many, not too few, just right. Carrots, for instance: They have 5 choices including one nearly irresistible variety called "Atomic Red" and several of the old standbys. In a matter of minutes, I chose Scarlet Nantes,

one of the few varieties I know did well in my ill-fated research a few years back.

All in all, it took me about an hour this morning--one measly mug of coffee--to go through the plant list in *Mother Earth News*, match it to the choices available in Hope Seed's online catalog, and fill in an order form.

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