



Planning your own garden plot

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Who wants to join our revolution? Everyone should. It's a revolution for better health and economic opportunities for small farmers, small communities and schools.

The very first thing you need to do is plan your "subversive plot." Everyone needs a plan, so get out your pencils, notebooks and seed catalogs and let's get going.

First off, once you order seed - you will always be placed on a wonderful mailing list for seed catalogs such as:

Johnny's

Baker Heirloom Seeds

Totally Tomatoes

Territorial Seed Company

Vermont Seed Company

and many, many more.

Next, you have to plan your plot. In your notebook draw a box the size of your garden(s). If you wish to use a piece of graph paper, do so. Some folks like to plant in straight rows, some of us don't care.

Now, make a list of vegetables your family and yourself enjoy.

Consider the basics like: lettuce, radish, onion, pumpkin, squash, tomato, peppers (both green, red and hot), egg plant, dill, cucumbers, green beans, beets, carrots and peas.

Now, when perusing the seed catalog one must consider the zone.

North Dakota is mostly in Zones 3a and 3b. This information comes from the 2012 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. It is the standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a location. The map is based on the average annual minimum winter temperature, divided into 10-degree F zones.

You do not need to know anything but which zone you are located in and we have in some places of North Dakota been moved up.

But don't fret... I heard last weekend at our Community Garden workshop that they can grow vegetables easily in Alaska and such far north places. The key is to select seeds and plants that are bred for our northern climate.

If you visit Johnnyseeds.com you will find a wealth of information on how to plan your plot.

On page two of the online catalog you can find seeds needed per row by foot and the yield making it a simple case of math. Here's the trick, involve your children in the planning. Have them do the math, select the varieties and keep the notebook up to date as your garden journal. Use colored pencils for your rows.

If you don't know when to plant seeds, Johnny's can help you out with that. Also, if you are going to start seeds in flats indoors, you can keep following this column each week until we get into the garden.

So looking at a page in your catalog you will find tons of info about your selections.

This is what you should watch for:

1. Check out the days to maturity. You will need to stay under 80 for the best results in this part of the state.
2. Check to see if the plants require full sun, partial sun or shady plots.
3. Finally increase your knowledge of botany by checking out the different varieties and scientific names of the plants. Read about flavor and

consistency, the number of seeds in a packet and whether or not the vegetables are heirloom. Contrary to popular belief, it is not that difficult to grow heirloom seeds. And, if you are feeling adventurous, you can begin seed saving as a family for future science assignments. At any rate, don't be afraid to try new varieties or plant one vegetable a year you have never tried. Some of us gardeners have enormous plots just because we want to plant one of everything. Something to consider is involving your children. We will talk about different ways to that in a future column. Until then, Google seed catalogs and see what fun you'll have.

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