



Warm and caressing, the sunshine coaxes the greening grass and touches delicate blooms of soft color.

Garden veggies await harvest, succulent and tasty with all those important vitamins and minerals disguised by their sheer deliciousness.

And nary a weed peeks up through thick stands of plant growth of picture perfection.

Yes, it's so. It really is. All there, in brilliant color — in the seed catalogs. In stunning color and described with the most appealing of phrases: masses of long-lasting blooms ... a standout in your garden ... fabulous in the kitchen ... sweetest ever ... outstanding yields ... extraordinary rich flavor.

In your dreams, I remind myself, plopping the stack of seed catalogs back on the coffee table. Remember the endless rain of last summer? Remember the rampant grass that choked out the geraniums and tangled the asparagus patch? Remember the cantaloupes that drowned and the gladioli bulbs that rotted in the ground?

Boy, good thing we gardeners have such selective memories. We prefer to recall the juicy, crisp Sugar Baby watermelons, the lovely, tender Red Sails lettuce, tasty tomatoes and perky jalapeno peppers.

Gardeners are undying optimists. This year — by gosh — this year will be different. And — by gosh — each year is different.

So with the slightly lengthening days, brighter sunshine and the visions of fresh veggies and sweet-smelling bouquets brought on by wishing with seed catalogs, it was inevitable. The spring fever bug attacked with a vengeance at my absolute most vulnerable spot — standing in a garden center aisle, face-to-face with racks of seed displays.

Understand, now, I fought it for awhile. Really I did. Walked away. Came back. Cirled the displays, eyeing the varieties. Debated that I

could order from the stack of catalogs waiting at home.

"But you need the Early Girl tomato seeds," urged the other half of my brain. "Need to get them started so you can get them out just as early as possible. Don't you want June tomatoes? And the final teasing thought: "It might be an early spring."

Resolve crumbled. Into the cart went the tomato seeds. Followed by a couple of others. A few steps away, what should turn up but another display of competitor's seed packets, sending the green thumb into packet-pickin' overdrive.

Half the brain still argued. Sure, there were a dozen seed catalogs in the stack at home. And they listed varieties that I also wanted but was not going to find in these display racks, so mail orders would still be necessary. It was no use. Into the cart went more packets.

Having gotten into the spirit, a list

from a catalog was in final preparation less than 24 hours later. A quick inventory of seeds left from last year confirmed what I had begun to suspect — once I thought about it — and several items on the list could be eliminated.

Admittedly, this seed packet impulse-buying is pretty poor planning. But it's a cheap addiction. Seeds are a wonderful bargain when you compare the cost to what's involved producing them and what the potential yields are.

Taking inventory of my impulse-bought seed packs. I scratched off the original mail order list several of the items scrawled there. Including sweet peas.

Somehow, not paying attention during the seed buying binge, I'd already acquired two packs of those. One of them grows 20-foot vines of the flowering peas.

Maybe I can train them to grow up the sides of a silo.



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