

GARDEN NEWS

TROPICAL VEGETABLES

The last frost date is fast approaching, and it's almost time to set out those warm weather veggies. Flowering and ornamental plants are wonderful, but gardening REALLY pays off when you sink your teeth into the tart sweetness of that first sun-warm, homegrown tomato. With that in mind, the varieties on each of our vegetable lists (see below) have been selected for TASTE TASTE TASTE! We've been shipping starts of many scrumptious tomatoes, peppers, summer and winter squash, and cucumbers this week. You can click on the title of each category and our link will take you to view the entire list, including full descriptions for each variety.

[Classic](#) – On this list we include tried and true varieties as well as promising new hybrids, all selected for flavor, disease resistance, and outstanding performance in the Northwest. As their names suggest, tomatoes like 'Oregon Cherry,' 'Oregon Spring,' 'Siletz,' 'Santiam,' 'Willamette,' and 'Medford' have been bred specifically to thrive in the cool nights of a Northwest summer. Many of our summer and winter squash have also been chosen for their ability to develop fully ripe, flavorful fruits in our climate.



[Heirloom](#) – These rediscovered varieties were the treasured favorites of past generations, with rich, full flavors and myriad shapes, sizes, and hues. Our heirloom tomato list contains an eclectic mix of beefsteak, slicer, paste, and cherry types, in all shades of red, orange, yellow, green, purple, white, "black," and a rainbow of streaked and swirled multicolors. Those old-time gardeners also came up with some colorful names: try a 'Hillbilly,' 'Kellogg's Breakfast,' 'Aunt Ruby's German Green,' or 'Nebraska Wedding' in the garden this year.



[Believe It or Not Vegetables](#) – It gets even more interesting, with this wide array of the strange and fantastic from around the world! The collection lives up to its name, ranging from the cute (little red-and-yellow striped 'Tigger' Melon), to the bizarre ('Marina di Chiogga' Melon disguises its sublime-tasting orange-yellow flesh under warty blue-gray skin), to the simply curious (like the 'Rat-Tailed Radish,' grown for its crispy edible seed pods). Some of these veggies defy the usual categories. One of our favorites, the 'Mexican Sour Gherkin,' looks just like a tiny watermelon, but tastes like a sweet cucumber with salad dressing already on it. Rediscovered in 2000, a French vegetable expert proclaimed it the best rediscovered heirloom in decades. We have based this category on the definitive reference guide for Mediterranean climate vegetable growers, *The Vegetable Garden*, published in 1885. For full descriptions with old-fashioned line drawings of each unusual form, please visit our [Believe It or Not Vegetable flyer](#).



FOLIAGE

It's not all about fruits and blooms! Plants with unusual foliage colors can make other, less colorful, plants pop, providing contrast and texture nestled in the garden's greenery. Since they're not dependent on bloom time, they provide consistent color, and many display their brightest or most vivid hues in shade or cooler weather. Our [Perennial](#) and [Tender Perennial](#) lists contain a number of plants, either variegated or colored, that are grown for their remarkable foliage

Variegated plants are usually multiple shades of green, or green combined with yellow or white in streaks, stripes, or splotches. Variegation is often assumed to occur due to viral mutations which can be unstable, but although this is true for a few plants, most are expressing a stable genetic mutation that results in some part of each leaf containing little or no chlorophyll, the pigment within the chloroplast that makes leaves green. A zone with little chlorophyll will appear pale green and an area with none will be white. Alternately, plants may have red or purple hues in their foliage because their leaves contain different, darker pigments that mask the green chlorophyll.

We have a number of excellent foliage plants available now that will brighten - or darken - your garden. The sunny yellow flowers of Hypericum 'Brigadoon' are beautiful, but you may hardly notice them against the plants' glowing chartreuse-to-golden leaves lightly blushed with red. Grow 'Brigadoon' in full sun for the golddest tones and in part shade for lime foliage. Heucheras, with their nice mounding habit and shapely scalloped leaves, are available in an increasing range of colors. Two that stand out are 'Midnight Rose,' a maroon-splotched deep purple that reddens in fall, and the apricot-bronze 'Peach Melba,' whose color grows more intense in fall. These heucheras prefer half shade, but will take full sun in cooler climates.



Recent issues of GARDEN NEWS may be viewed at www.loghouseplants.com/gardennews.htm