

DIRTY FINGERNAILS AND ALL

Catalog nights and hot buttered rum

BY SIOUX ROGERS



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I sat in front of a roaring fire, my two dogs sprawled at my feet as I sipped on a steaming cup of hot buttered rum, staring at 18 seed catalogs, at least, spread everywhere. Winter is when the “real gardener” begins the obsessive task of ordering seeds, dreaming of this year’s “perfect” garden. This year I am consciously (as opposed to unconsciously) considering where to plant everything. This is called a “plot plan.”

Then what? Spring arrives. Then what? All the “mistakes” arrive in the mail. Lordy, Lordy, I certainly did not order 68 packages of seeds. I am positive there is a mistake. Now what? I double-check my well-thought-out plot plan of where to plant everything. Now I need to reassess the plot plan. I thought it was so brilliant and perfect, but maybe not. After all, where would I ever have space for seeds from 68 packages, especially if all the seeds germinated? Whew, I better check again. My plot plan was designed for the contents of 43 seed packs. I couldn’t possibly have ordered 68 packages of seeds. So now what? Need to make numerous phone calls and set the seed catalog folks straight. Right!

Do you know what a “mystery paper” is? It is a lost piece of scrap paper with a list of at least 25 different flowers you want to grow. Slap my forehead. Now what? Well, for the moment I am just claiming insanity for an aging brain.

Next I will plead, still claiming insanity, to all my gardener friends (wonder if I have enough of them) that they honestly need to plant clarkia, blue salvias, marigolds,

zinnias, nasturtiums, amaranths, petunias, more zinnias, snap dragons, and then more I forgot. They, my gardener friends, can plant my flower seeds and then bring me beautiful bouquets of “my” flowers all summer.

That plan has only moderate success, as I do not have enough insane friends.

Ordering from seed catalogs is a challenge: so many choices, too many seeds, where to plant what. If this is so difficult and can become so complicated, why don’t I just buy vegetables and

flowers at the local growers mart? Answer: no idea!

When ordering seeds from catalogs, pay attention to the variety of what you are considering. Here is what I mean. I like radishes because they are so easy to grow, but I don’t like hot and bitter radishes. Read the label and find a radish variety that says, “Tastes sweet.” Lettuce, and all green leaf stuff, for that matter, tends to bolt. Look for lettuce seeds that say, “Slow to bolt” or “No bolting.” If you are partial to certain flower colors, here is the time

to “paint your garden” as you like. If your local nursery has zinnias but not the colors you are craving, grow them yourself. Get the color you like. You are the artist, so please yourself.

Before ordering from the seed catalogs, make sure you check the growing conditions for what you want. Don’t ignore “best grown in shade” and then plant in full sun. Study colors, ultimate height, whether it needs staking, trellis, or something else. You get to order what suits you and your garden plot.

Order from the seed catalogs the plants and special varieties of plants you cannot find locally. Start germinating those seeds so they are ready to plant about the same time you plant the small nursery seedlings. Actually, some of your seeds probably can be directly sowed when the soil is ready. Read the back of the seed packages for planting dates.

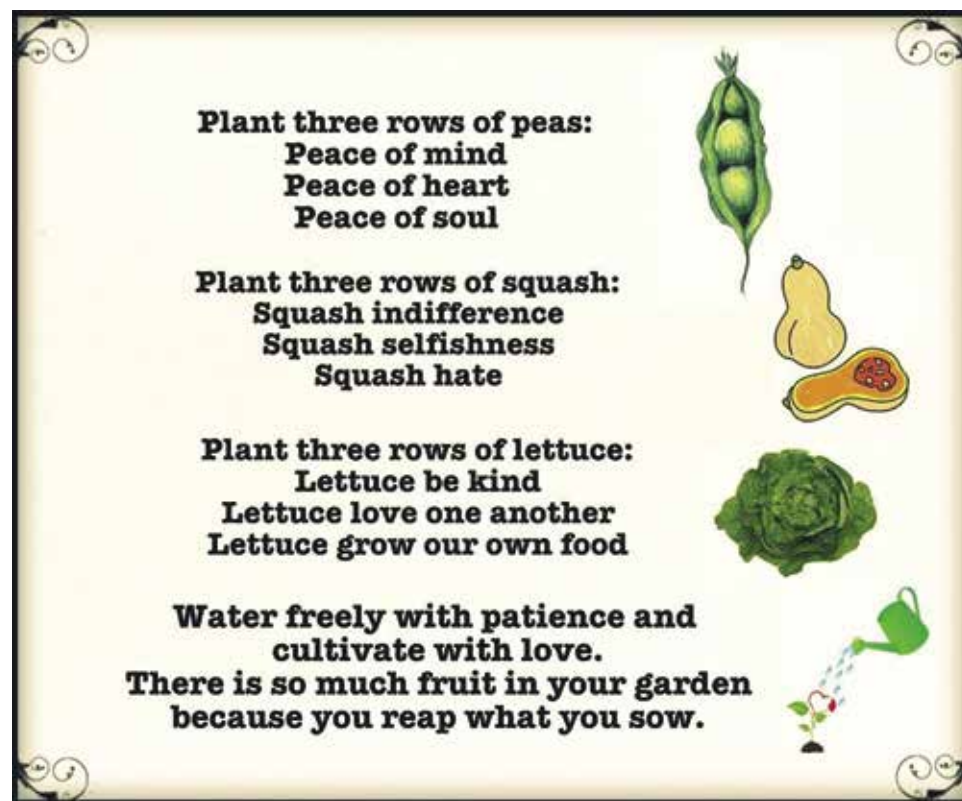
If you need an abundance of any particular plant, say lettuce, then by all means sow seeds directly into the garden soil. However, I usually buy vegetable starts of Japanese eggplant, cauliflower, cabbage, and broccoli. I have not had great luck germinating those, and I have very limited germinating space.

Flower seeds are different. I never have enough flowers. Mind you, I struggle with germination, but it’s so worth it, even with moderate success. Flower power for me.

So here you are with still time to order, really. Paint your garden with colors, just as you like. It is your garden, and you are the artist.

Sioux Rogers • littlemuddyred@gmail.com

Thoughts for gardens (author unknown).



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