## What To Look For In Vegetable **Varieties**

Selecting a good variety, while it doesn't assure gardening success, is an essential element in the vegetable grower's success formula.

A seed shopper should know more about what he or she is buying than what is related by the attractive picture on the packet, cautions George Hughes, in charge of extension horticulture at North Carolina State University.

Hughes suggests considering these points in deciding on the variety of each crop: 1. specific use; 2. growth habit and mature size; 3. vigor and yield; 4. adaptability; and 5. disease and insect resistance.

Some of the best information on these variety characteristics is available from all county Agricultural Extension Service offices in North Carolina. Call or visit the nearest office for detailed information.

Hughes makes the following points about variety characteristics:

Specific use - Some varieties are best for immediate use. while others may be ideal for freezing or canning. Some keep well in storage, and others are fine for all of these purposes. Just be sure the variety you select is the right one for the uses you have in mind.

Growth habit and mature size-If you have limited space in your garden, look for spacesaving vegetable varieties. Each year new ones are introduced look for compact forms of squash, cucumber, cantaloupe and watermelon.

Vigor and yield-These qualities partly depend on soil fertility, available water and other growing conditions. Höwever, when selecting varieties it often pays to buy hydrids. These are plants that have built-in vigor, improved quality, and higher yield than non-hybrid varieties.

Adaptability-How well a vegetable variety grows in a given locality is basic to wise climatic conditions, including length of growing season. Much of this information is found in seed catalogs and on the packet. However, you must also be aware of your garden's own growing conditions that can affect plant performance, such as depth of topsoil, and soil texture, and exposure to sun and wind.

Disease resistance—Select disease resistant varieties whenever possible. This is especially important for vegetables like tomatoes, cucumbers and cantaloupes, which are subject to destructive wilts, mildews and viruses. Some seeds, such as peas and corn, are available treated with a fungicide to prevent rot after planting. This is a desirable feature.

Insect and other pest resistance-Little resistance has been built into vegetable varieties by plant breeders, although there has been some progress, such as the development of nematode-resistant tomato varieties. However, if you don't want to be bothered by bugs, select types of vegetables that seem naturally less attractive to pests. Ask your county extension agent about this.

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS Research shows that if mothers-to-be want their babies to have strong teeth, the expectant mother should eat foods rich in phosphorus and calcium (such as milk and cheese) and vitamin C, such as citrus fruits and tomatoes. Also important is vitamin D, the sunshine vitamin.





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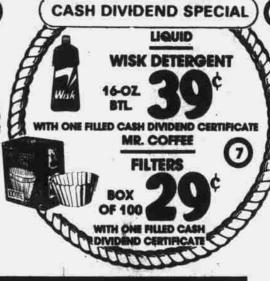
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