



Spruce Cottage Farm's

Periodic Newsletter

January 5th, 2014

Greetings Gardeners,

The Winter Solstice has come and gone and the New Year has begun. Here's to a wonderful year of gardening adventures and growing successes! I value this time of year to reflect on the hits and misses of last season. Try as I might, during the season I don't always get to recording what occurred (despite those eighteen hours of daylight!). As I clean out last season's gardening drawer, what I did manage to jot down jogs my memory enough that I can flesh out my records for the season a bit more. These records are a useful tool as the seasons go by so I'm grateful for this wintry, quiet time to remember and record my previous season's gardening adventures.

I would call last season a wonderful success, in terms of my harvest and my business. The fantastic amount of sunshine last summer (and lack of cool summer nights) allowed me to harvest three winter squash (one of my personal growing challenges) as well as a great amount of food for the market and for myself. One Junction gardener grew corn last summer too! Last year's plant sales were super as well, allowing my business to grow a few

inches. A big thank you to everyone for ensuring my business also had a successful season.

I've just started receiving seed catalogues in the mail and I'm reading every one cover to cover! Seed catalogues are a font of information, from germination requirements to the timing for direct seeding to the potential yield for an acre(!) of carrots. Don't forget to look for the Safe Seed Pledge, usually near the beginning of the catalogue. This ensures you are supporting a seed company that does not knowingly buy or sell genetically engineered seeds. Given that the long-term consequences of genetically engineered seeds are unknown, I choose to support seed companies that take the Safe Seed Pledge.

With the arrival of the 2014 seed catalogues, I have visions of tiny green seedlings dancing through my head. As I peruse the catalogues, I'm keeping an eye out for what is new and exciting for the season - unusually coloured vegetables seem to be one of the top trends this year - purple cauliflower, anyone? The herb of the year is *Artemisia*, a wonderfully diverse group of plants. From bitter medicinal (Wormwood) to delicate culinary (French Tarragon) to striking (and drought tolerant!) ornamentals (*Artemisia ludoviciana* 'Silver King'), *Artemisia*'s are amazing! Many of the ornamental varieties are hardy in our area and our own wild sage is *Artemisia frigida*. This family of plants is one of my absolute favourites! I usually grow *Artemisia annua* 'Sweet Annie' every year - a wonderfully sweetly-scented, ferny-foliaged plant- be sure to check out my 2014 Plant List and Order Form

(available in mid-March) for all the Artemisia varieties I'll have available this season.

I am looking forward to another fantastic season full of fabulous flowers, vibrant veggies and healthful herbs! This year, I will be bringing in a collection of seeds for resale, from the seed company The Cottage Gardener in Ontario. I trialled quite a few of their seeds last year and was quite pleased with the results - excellent germination and generous amounts of seed per pack. The seeds they source are all open-pollinated and run the range from certified organic to sustainably grown. I'll be bringing in a variety of seeds, focussing on direct seeded vegetables such as lettuce, beets and carrots. If there is any seed in particular that Junction gardeners are looking for, please let me know and I'll do my best to bring it in. Seeds will be available from the end of March onwards. I'll send out a list once I've completed it!

I will be growing a full complement of vegetable, flower and herb starts this season and I hope to offer retail hours at the greenhouse as well - I'll keep you all posted!
In growing harmony,

Jolene Billwiller

~ Gardening Maven ~



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