

the good heart life

easy-to-grow varieties for a delicious organic harvest

There's nothing so lovely as sitting beside a cozy fire with a cup of tea and seed catalogs spread about during a cold mid-winter day. It's a time of dreaming and discovering—last season's weeds are long gone and anything is possible in the growing season to come. While I love finding new varieties to try, I always make sure to plant my favorites, which are not only easy to grow, but also offer some of the best flavors you can harvest.

You can source these seeds from High Mowing Organic Seeds, Johnny's Selected Seeds, and Fedco Seed Company. Happy growing (and eating, too)!

~Kate



BEAN: Strike

Similar to Provider, but with a more concentrated fruit set, making harvesting fast. Strike has slender, stringless pods great for eating raw and processing.

BEEF: Boro F1

The sweetest beet! Boro F1 is ready to harvest in just 55 days, making it one of the earliest beets we grow. I love its smooth skin and deep red color. Can be grown for baby beets or for storage, and the flavor only sweetens in storage.

CABBAGE: Caraflex F1

A “sweetheart” cabbage, this cone-shaped cabbage has incredibly tender and sweet leaves, making it perfect for fresh eating.

CARROT: Napoli

The earliest carrot we’ve found, Napoli can be harvested at a baby size in just 45 days, and grows to full size in 55 days. We plant this variety in successions spring through fall, and it sweetens considerably in the fall after a few light frosts.

CHARD: Orange and Pink Passion

Okay, I picked two! While they taste the same, I love growing both of these Swiss chard varieties, for their bright and bold colors.

CUCUMBER: Silver Slicer

A pale yellow, almost white cucumber! These cukes have thin skin and a small seed cavity, plus a delicious fresh cucumber taste. Even with their unlikely color, silver slicers have quickly become a favorite among our CSA Members at Good Heart Farmstead.

KALE: Red Russian

Kale! This is one of my most favorite crops to grow and eat, for its versatility through the seasons and on the plate. While there are many varieties of kale, I always come back to Red Russian, and heirloom that is tender enough for raw kale salads, and hearty enough to grow into November.

LETTUCE: Black Seeded Simpson

A bright green and super early head lettuce, black seeded simpson is a true stand-by as one of the earliest varieties we grow. While some varieties are only suited to spring or fall, this one withstands summer heat and can be planted throughout the entire growing season.

ONION: New York Early

A fantastic early yellow storage onion with a deep bronze skin. Grows well in cool, short seasons. We’ve had firm New York Early onions in storage through into April (and they’d likely have lasted longer if we hadn’t eaten them!)

PEA: Cascadia

A sweet snap pea that produces well without the need for 6 feet of trellising! The plants top out around 3’, but are super productive and delicious.

PUMPKIN: Long Pie

If you love making pumpkin pie, you'll love long pie! This oblong pumpkin has a small seed cavity, giving you a whole lot more meat to turn into pie.

RADISH: French Breakfast and Watermelon

I always look forward to the spice of French Breakfast radishes in the spring. Eat them raw sprinkled with salt for a peppery treat. In the fall, watermelon radish's bright pink interior will have you thinking of tropical islands even as the foliage turns and leaves fall to the ground. Watermelon radish is mild with a subtle sweetness, great for eating raw, sautéing, or roasting.

SPINACH: Butterflay

This bright green, semi-savoyed spinach emerges early in the spring, making it a top early season pick.

SQUASH, winter: Nutterbutter

My favorite butternut by far! Nutterbutter averages 1.5 lbs, and is more manageable in the kitchen than the giant Waltham butternut. It also grows faster, and is ready for harvest in just 90 days, making it a great pick for short seasons.

TOMATO: Rose de Berne

If I could only grow one tomato, Rose de Berne would be it! A rosy pink heirloom slicer, it's meaty and sweet, with a touch of tang. Great for slicing and eating raw, but meaty enough to add into sauces and salsas.

TURNIP: Hakurei

Don't turn up your nose at this turnip! Different from the storage turnips, this little gem looks like a white radish. It's easy to grow, fast to harvest, and a delicious treat eating right from the garden or sliced and added to salads.

ZUCCHINI: Midnight Lightning

I've harvested A LOT of zucchini, from my time working in the trials field at High Mowing Organic Seeds to my years running a CSA. And while I don't find much of a difference in taste between varieties, I do find a big difference in ease of harvest, which is why I LOVE Midnight Lightning. It's stems grow wide, making it easy to see the fruit, but most importantly, it's practically spineless, which means you won't scratch up your arms when you're harvesting bucket-loads of this high-yielding zuke.