

Maggie Stuckey

THE CONTAINER
VICTORY GARDEN

A Beginner's Guide to Growing Your Own Groceries



A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

The Container Victory Garden

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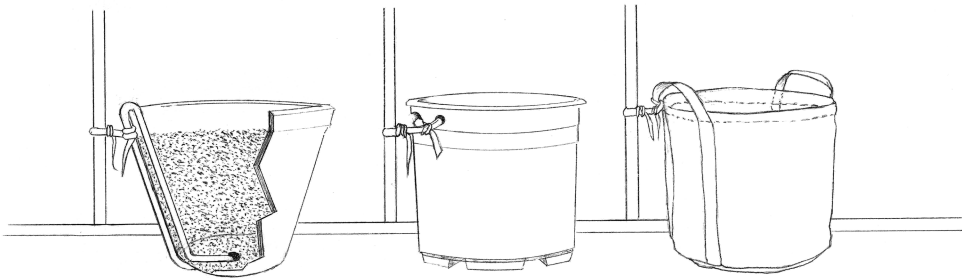
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CHAPTER 2

Planning Your Glorious Garden



Three ways to anchor containers against strong winds, left to right: (1) For containers you can't drill, thread the wire or cord down through the drainage hole and back up to the top. (2) Drill two holes near the top, thread the cord through them and back out. (3) Tie cord directly to container where possible (here, loop handles of a grow bag).

Cool/Warm Season Planting Guide

VEGETABLES	COOL SEASON	WARM SEASON
Asian greens	X	
Beans		X
Beets	X	x
Carrots	X	X
Leafy Greens	X	x
Lettuce and other salad greens	X	
Peas	X	
Radishes	X	x
Tomatoes		X

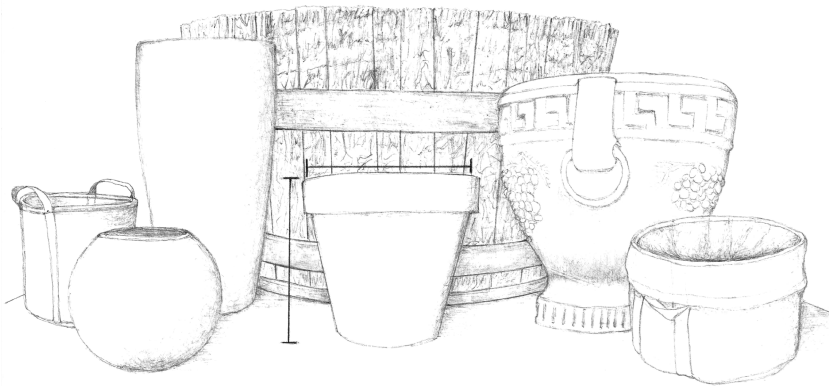
HERBS	COOL SEASON	WARM SEASON
Basil		X
Parsley	X	

EDIBLE FLOWERS	COOL SEASON	WARM SEASON
Begonias	x	X
Dianthus	X	
Nasturtiums		X
Pansy and Viola	X	

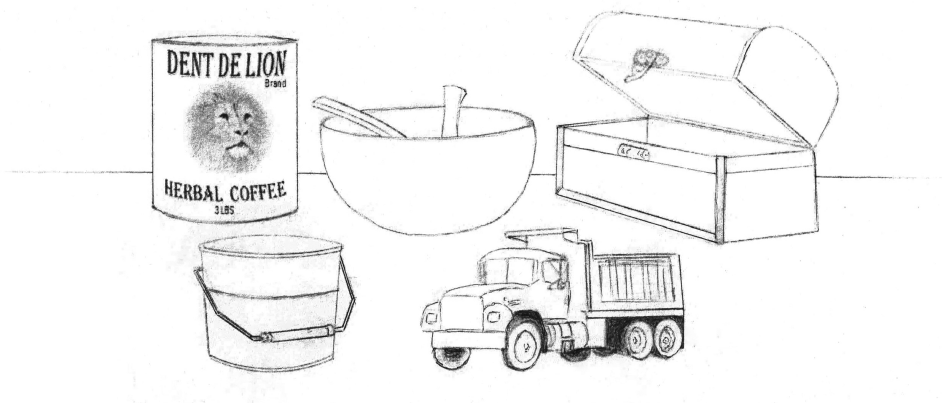
Note: An X in both columns means that plant produces in both seasons; a smaller x indicates a less robust result. Since most herbs are perennials, for them the season question doesn't apply.

CHAPTER 3

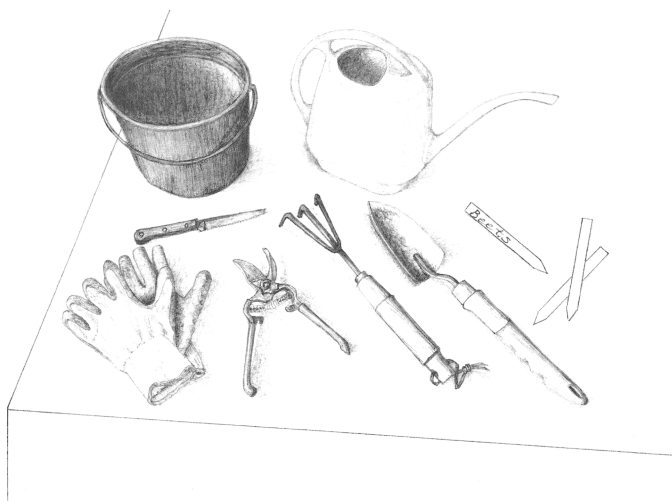
Gear Up!



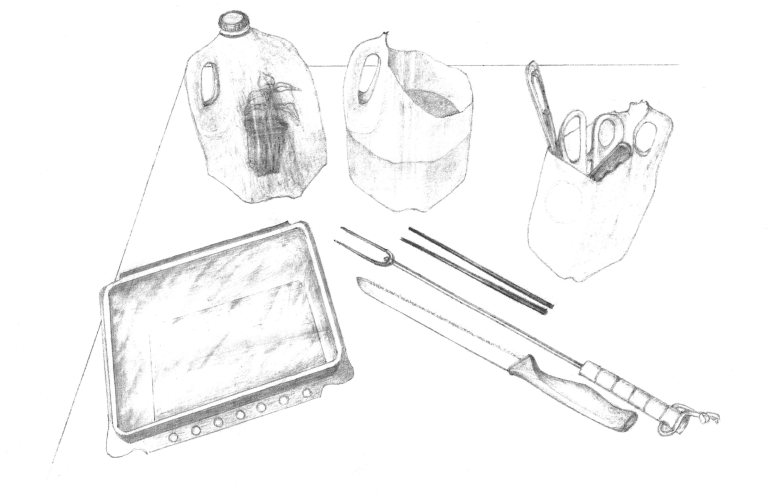
Commercial containers, left to right: Fabric grow bag. Round ceramic. Tall plastic. Clay in traditional shape (showing that diameter and height are the same). Molded plastic. Another grow bag. Wooden barrel in rear.



Do-it-your-clever-self containers. Front row: A plastic bucket is easy to move around. Toy dump truck for a child's planting. Back row: Restaurant-size can (the can opener known as a *church key* quickly makes triangular drainage holes). Large bowl, plastic or wooden. Wooden or plastic storage box. You *must* add drainage holes to all!



Left to right, front row: gloves, pruners, cultivator, trowel, plastic write-upon plant labels. Rear: small knife, bucket, watering can.



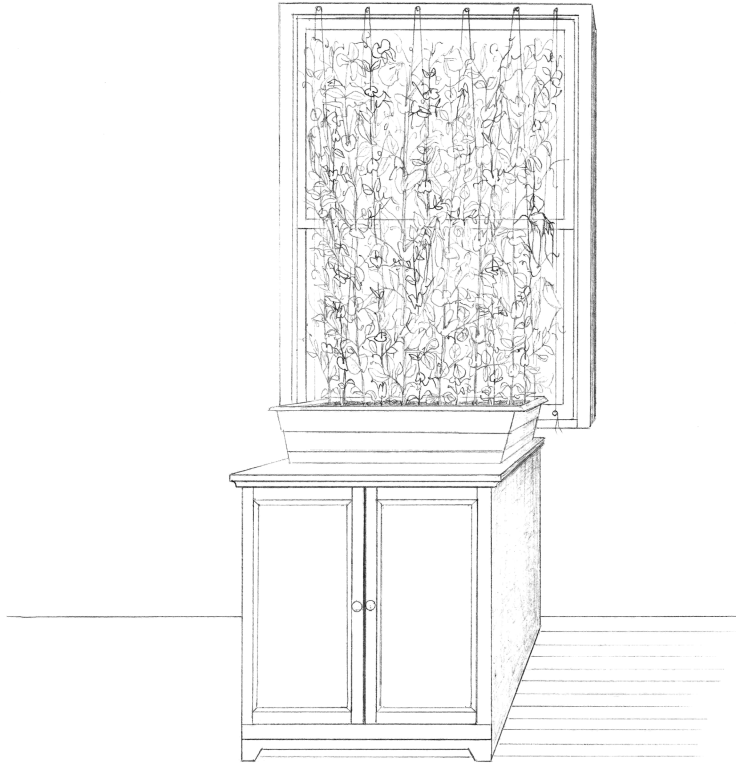
Household items make no-cost gardening tools. Front row: plastic clamshell container becomes a miniature greenhouse; serrated knife works like a small handsaw; barbecue fork for reaching deep into a container; chopsticks for many tasks. Back row: three ways to use plastic milk jugs.



Space-saving pyramid. Three pots of exact same height, with rims touching in the center and fourth pot on top—lots of planting space in a small footprint.



An elegant baker's rack holds many containers in a space-saving vertical format.



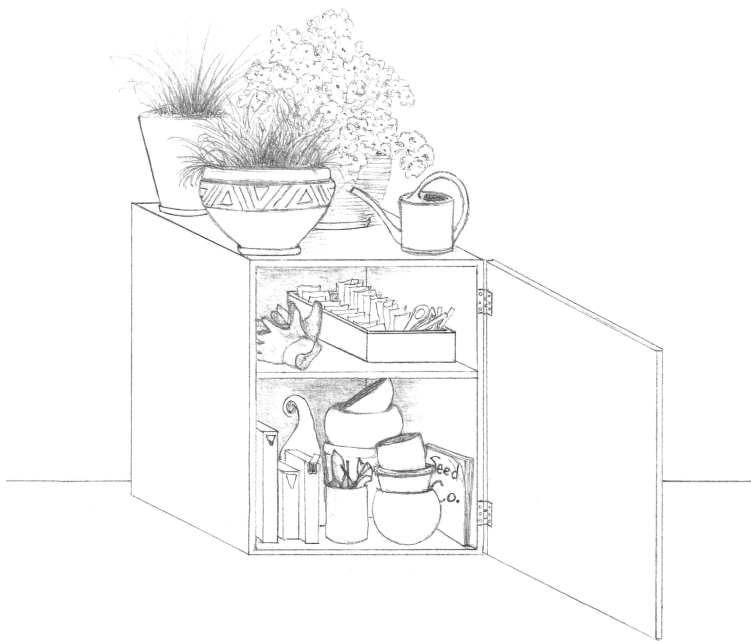
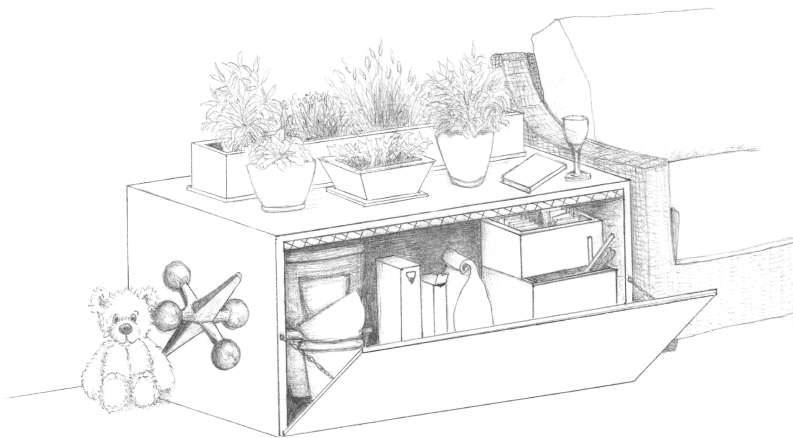
Sugar snap peas, growing in horizontal container on top of garden cabinet, climb a zigzag trellis of fishing line on Maggie's window.



Slip individual garlic cloves into any tiny bare spot in your container, and before long you'll be harvesting delicious green foliage that tastes like a garlic version of green onion and takes up almost no space.



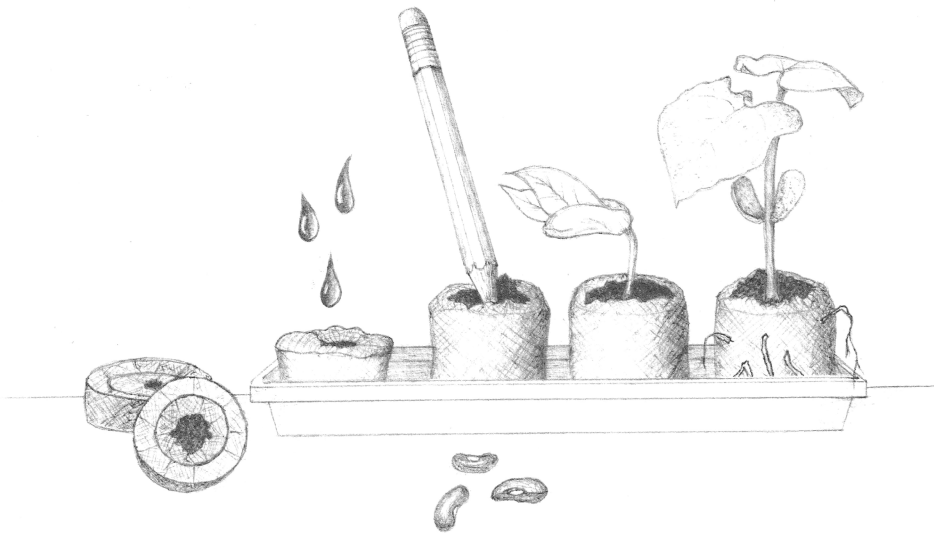
Clear plastic boxes, tucked underneath a bench, reduce visual clutter but keep supplies handy.



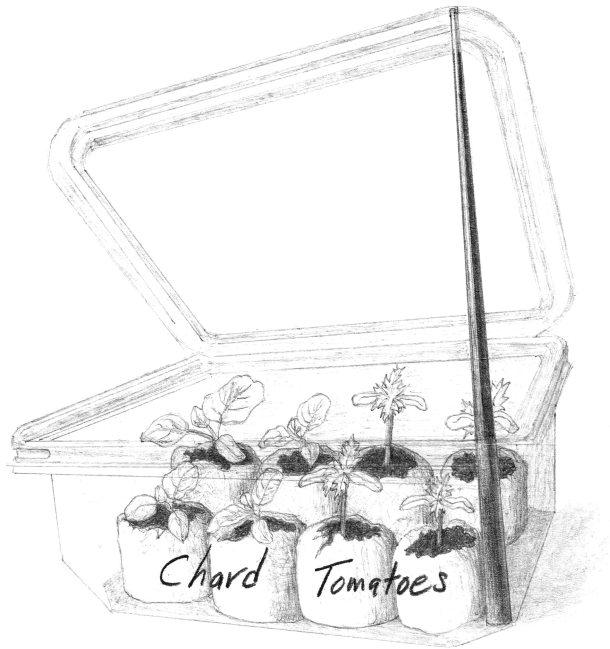
Wooden chests repurposed for garden storage.

CHAPTER 4

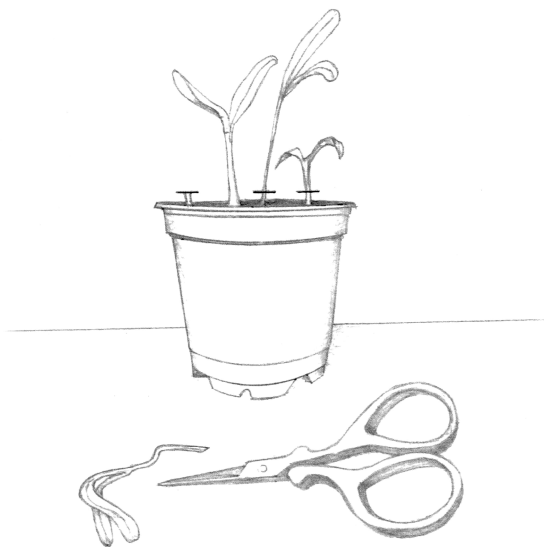
Designing, Planting, Nurturing



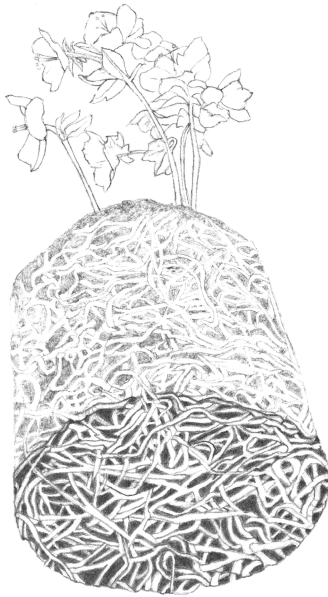
Peat pellets, from beginning to transplant-ready.



Recycle those large clamshell plastic bins from the grocery store into mini greenhouses.
Bonus: you can write on the outsides with markers.



When several seeds germinate very close together, you must do some thinning. Choose the strongest-looking seedling and remove the others. Manicure scissors will help you get into just the right spot.



This plant is seriously root-bound. It looks creepy, but it can be salvaged. Cut away at least half of that snarl, loosen up the rest, and replant.



This is what gardeners mean by a *six-pack*. No beer in sight.

CHAPTER 5

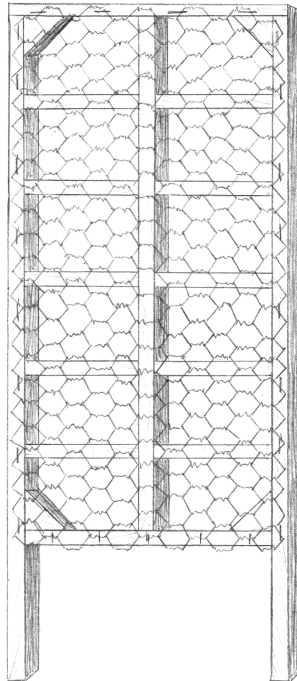
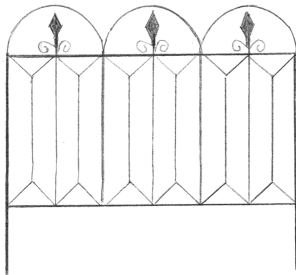
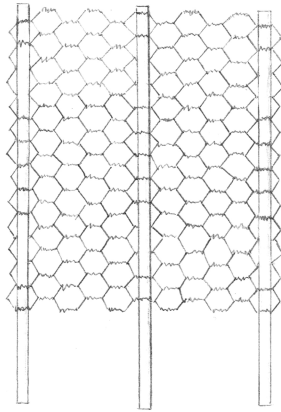
The Good Stuff: Vegetables



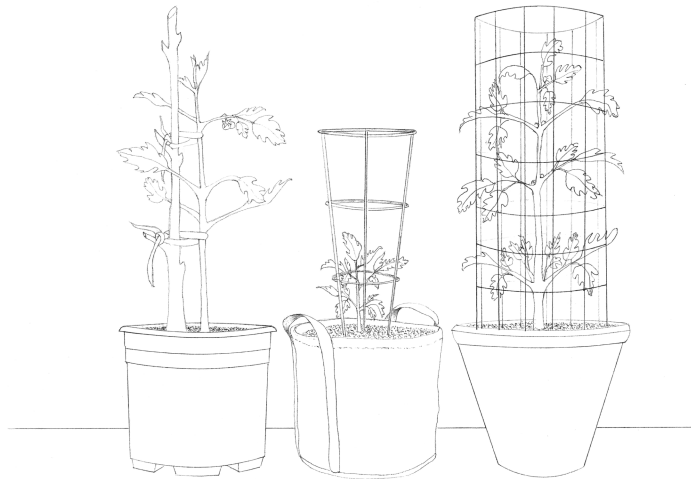
This is what bolting looks like. On the left, a healthy looseleaf lettuce, minding its own business. On the right, that same lettuce when hot weather has caused it to bolt; it seems to happen almost overnight.



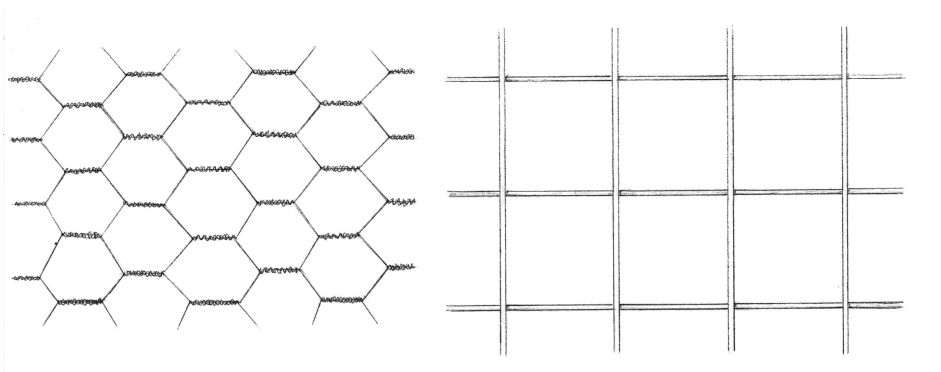
That tiny three-way tendril at the top of the pea vine, no thicker than sewing thread, will wrap itself around a vertical support with enough strength to hold up the entire vine. Amazing engineering design.



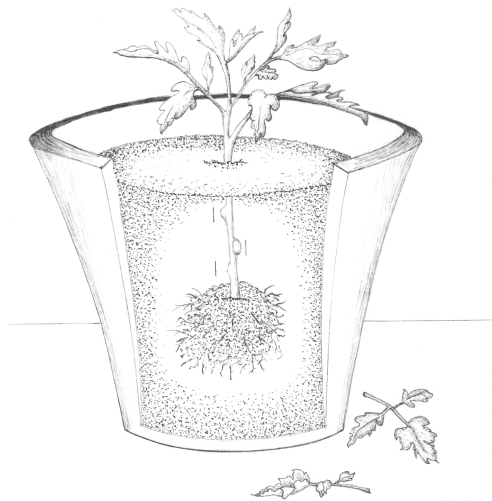
Three trellis styles for peas. *Top left:* Chicken wire threaded with wooden dowels as legs can be shaped to fit into a container. *Bottom left:* Decorative wire fencing panels, designed to mark the edges of garden beds, are a good height for bush peas. *Right:* A very sturdy trellis, strong enough to support vining peas, is overlaid with chicken wire that the tendrils can easily grab.



Three tomato supports, left to right. A sturdy tree branch, with trimmed stubs to keep the fabric ties from slipping. A standard cage from the hardware store. A strong cage made from heavy-duty wire.



Chicken wire (left) is familiar and widely available but relatively flimsy. Hogwire (right) is sturdy enough to stand up on its own. Both would make good custom-size support cages for things like tomatoes, but chicken wire will need to be supported with strong stakes.



To help your tomato plant develop the full root system it craves, snip off half of the existing branches and plant the whole thing deep in the pot. New roots grow from the nodes where branches used to be.

CHAPTER 6

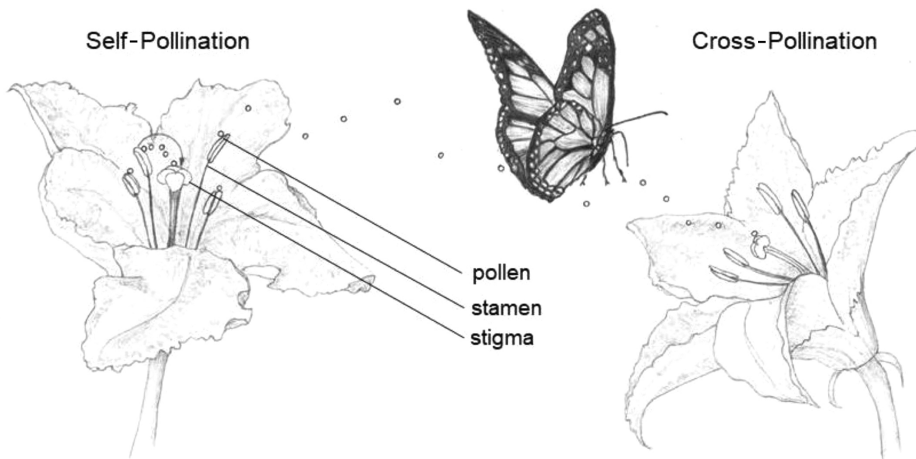
The Good Stuff: Herbs



To keep a plant's shape compact and bushy, pinch off (or cut) leggy stems just above a growth bud in the V where leaves attach. Those buds will then grow into new branches, which may need their own pinching at some point.

CHAPTER 7

The Good Stuff: Edible Flowers



A lovely butterfly, nibbling on pollen, accidentally pollinates both that flower (called *self-pollination*) and another nearby. Both are now able to produce viable seeds for next year.

Photo Gallery

From the hundreds of specific plants I've recommended earlier in this book, I've selected a particular group for this special photo gallery. I chose them based on two criteria: that I consider them especially noteworthy in some respect and that I suspect many of you may not be familiar with them.

For a rather silly example, think about radishes. Wonderful as they are in many ways, you probably don't need me to show you a picture of one; everybody knows what a radish looks like. But suppose you were reading along and came to the description of a Watermelon radish. I'm guessing you didn't even know such a thing existed—and it's pretty darned amazing. Wouldn't you like to know what it looks like? Of course you would.

As you're planning your own personal container Victory Garden, you may have that same thought often while reading about a certain plant: *I wonder what that thing looks like.* That's where this gallery comes in. The photos are listed here in the same sequence as you would encounter the plants when reading chapters 5, 6, and 7. If you don't find the exact photo you're looking for here, a simple internet search can likely help you.

Beneath many of the photos you will find the name of the seed company or organization that generously supplied them for us. You can take that to mean that they also sell those very seeds—except remember that things do change over time. If what you're interested in turns out to be no longer available, all of those fine organizations can recommend a good substitute. You might also take a look at the Resources appendix for a more detailed description of these companies and their offerings. And don't blame me if you get thoroughly swept up and miss dinner.

PHOTO GALLERY IMAGE CREDITS

A resounding shout-out to these companies and organizations for the use of their beautiful images in this photo gallery. Beneath many individual photos you will see the name of the seed company that provided it, which means they are also a great source for the item pictured. If you wish to learn more, you'll find their website address immediately below their name in the list here.

All-America Selections

www.all-americaselections.org

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds

www.rareseeds.com

Gardener's Supply Company

www.gardeners.com

Johnny's Selected Seeds

www.johnnyseeds.com

Renee's Garden

www.reneesgarden.com

Totally Tomatoes

www.totallytomato.com



VEGETABLES

Asian Greens, Little Jade Chinese Cabbage



©reneesgarden.com

Asian Greens, Merlot Chinese Cabbage



Johnny's Selected Seeds

Asian Greens, Scarlette Chinese Cabbage



Shutterstock/bonchan

Asian Greens, Mizuna



Shutterstock/ElenVik

VEGETABLES

Asian Greens, Central Red Mizuna



Johnny's Selected Seeds

Asian Greens, Green Fortune Pak Choi



©reeneesgarden.com

Asian Greens, Tatsoi



Shutterstock/meeboonstudio

French Mascotte Beans



©reeneesgarden.com



Royal Burgundy Beans



Shutterstock/Master the moment

Formanova Beets



Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds/rareseed.com

Chioggia Beets



Shutterstock/Art_Pictures

Golden Beets



Shutterstock/vaivirga

VEGETABLES

Parisienne Carrots



Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds/rareseed.com

Romeo Carrots



©reeneesgarden.com

New Kuroda Carrots



Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds/rareseed.com

Leafy Greens, Bright Lights Swiss Chard



Johnny's Selected Seeds



Leafy Greens, Green Curls Kale



©reeneesgarden.com

Leafy Greens, Red Giant Mustard Green



Shutterstock/Peter Turner Photography

Lollo Rossa Lettuce



Shutterstock/Chatcham172

Tom Thumb Butterhead Lettuce



Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds/rareseed.com

VEGETABLES

Garden Babies Butterhead Lettuce



©reeneesgarden.com

Little Gem Romaine Lettuce



Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds/rareseed.com

Snak Hero Peas



All-America Selections

Little Crunch Peas



©reeneesgarden.com



Pink Beauty Radish



©reeneesgarden.com

Easter Basket Radish mix



Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds/rareseed.com

French Breakfast Radish



Shutterstock/Skrypnikov Dmytro

Watermelon Radish



Shutterstock/Sacha van der Veen

VEGETABLES

Yellow Patio Choice Tomato



All-America Selections

Tidy Treats Tomato



Johnny's Selected Seeds

Lizzano Tomato



All-America Selections

Litt'l Bites Tomato



Gardener's Supply



Sungold Tomato



Shutterstock/Jess Abeita

Ruby Crush Tomato



Totally Tomatoes and Sakata Seed America

Celano Tomato



All-America Selections

Sunrise Sauce Tomato



Johnny's Selected Seeds

HERBS

Purple Basil



Shutterstock/emrahh

Siam Queen Basil



All-America Selections

Windowbox Mini Basil



©reneesgarden.com

Persian Basil



All-America Selections

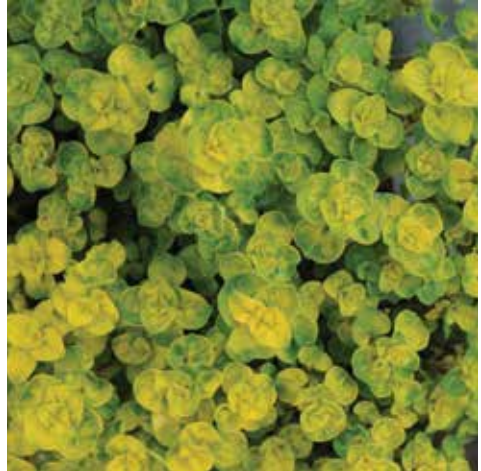


Garlic Chives



Shutterstock/ahmydaria

Golden Oregano



Shutterstock/OA2

Rosemary



Shutterstock/janaph

Lemon Thyme



Shutterstock/TAGSTOCK1

EDIBLE FLOWERS

Tuberous Begonias, assorted colors



Shutterstock/Dorothy Chiron

Dianthus mixture



Shutterstock/EQRoy

Nasturtiums, trailing style



Shutterstock/Edita Medeina

Jewel Mix Nasturtiums



Shutterstock/Jack N. Mohr



Alaska Nasturtiums



Shutterstock/Julie Vader

Gleam Nasturtiums



Shutterstock/mizy

Nasturtium, Cherries Jubilee



©reeneesgarden.com

Pansies, assorted colors



Shutterstock/Jerry Gantar

APPENDIX: RESOURCES FOR GARDENERS

Mail-Order and Internet Sources

First, I need to point out a few things.

1. This list is in no way comprehensive. This is especially true of the e-commerce suggestions. The ones listed here are not the only possibilities, not by a long shot. They are simply the ones I am familiar with, admire, and gladly recommend to you. A highly opinionated list of favorites, you might say.
2. The companies and organizations listed here are separated into just two large groups: (1) horticultural industry and gardening organizations, and (2) e-commerce companies, those wonderful folks who offer a range of garden products by mail order. Companies in that second, much larger category are listed alphabetically, and I urge you to read all the descriptions carefully, to uncover their main attributes. Some companies specialize; some are all-purpose. Some are geared to a particular climate range. Some sell plants as well as seeds. Some provide a wide range of gardening tools and equipment, either in addition to seeds or sometimes as their main focus. Some offer their catalogs online only; some have both print and online (and all of them are bursting with helpful information).
3. The information listed here is accurate as of mid-2022, but as you know, things change—often for the better—in this particular marketplace. I know you recognize

that, so this is just a gentle reminder for patience if you run into a glitch here or there. And if you find a new favorite, I'd love to hear about it.

4. As you explore the websites of the seed houses here, you will often be presented with an offer to subscribe to their newsletters. My enthusiastic advice is—accept. They're almost always free, and always helpful, and easy to unsubscribe from, if it doesn't suit. Even the brief messages that pop up in your email inbox are useful: headlines like "Ready to plant tomatoes?" can serve as a good kick in the blue jeans for those times when the calendar gets away from us.
5. A special note about ordering live plants by mail: common sense tells us that traveling long distances is hard on defenseless little plants, so try to find sources as close to you as possible. That's one reason I scouted around for companies based in various regions. All these suppliers take great care to package well, but if you let the box sit unattended for days after it arrives, you're just asking for disappointment.

Organizations: Information, Inspiration, and Commiseration

ALL-AMERICA SELECTIONS (AAS)

<https://all-americaselections.org>

From their website: All-America Selections is an independent nonprofit organization that tests new, never-before-sold varieties for the home gardener. After a full season of anonymous trialing by volunteer horticulture professionals, only the top garden performers are given the AAS Winner award designation for their superior performance. AAS is the only national, nonprofit plant trialing organization in North America.

From me: Every AAS winner has its own page on the website, with one or more photos, growing instructions, and, in more recent years, notes from the judges about features they especially loved. We gardeners owe a great debt to these volunteer growers and judges. The results of their dedicated work are so well respected that many seed houses set aside a special highlighted section on their websites for AAS winners; they know their customers will not be disappointed.

NATIONAL GARDENING ASSOCIATION

<https://garden.org>

From their website: Since 1971, our mission is to promote gardening. With over a million members, we are the largest social media website dedicated exclusively to gardening. We teach people how to get started gardening and improve their plant-growing skills.

From me: And how! This is an incredible resource, free to all users (you don't have to be a member to access the info), absolutely crammed with information yet wonderfully easy to use. For example, with just your zip code you can find your USDA zone, your local frost dates, and a comprehensive planting calendar that matches your climate patterns. Another example: from their jumpacked website, one (just one of many) main category is Garden Learning Library, where one (just one) subcategory is Food Gardening Guides, which is further subdivided into Vegetables, Fruits, and Herbs; in turn, the Vegetables group offers more than 220 articles that provide comprehensive information for eleven groups of most popular vegetables, further broken down into in four subheadings: Getting Started, Planting, Care, and Harvesting. Whew.

NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS, INC.

<https://gardenclub.org>

If you're interested in joining a local garden club but don't know anyone who can point you in the right direction, start with the home page of this national organization. At the top, find the tab called "Join a Club," be sure to allow the site to access your location, then enter your zip code at "Find a Club." Read the descriptions and choose one that fits you best, either for location or special interest.

COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICES

Extension offices, under the umbrella of the US Department of Agriculture, are rich with resources for home gardeners. The easiest way to access the one you want is to simply ask your favorite search engine for "extension office for [XYZ] county, state."

Mail-Order Sources: Seeds, Plants, Tools, Equipment, and Good Advice

BAKER CREEK HEIRLOOM SEEDS

2278 Baker Creek Rd., Mansfield, MO 65704

www.rareseeds.com (for online catalog and orders)

seeds@rareseeds.com (for questions)

Catalog: Print and online

A family-owned seed company with a passion: “saving our agricultural and culinary heritage.” That means they sell only heirloom seeds and strive to find rare varieties from Asia and Europe, including many that date from the nineteenth century. Sounds like their offerings would be limited, doesn’t it? Nope. They have seeds for well over one thousand vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Some are unusual and exotic, some are cozily familiar, and to my mind every single one is intriguing. The catalog is filled with gorgeous photography, and shipping for seeds is free. Wonderful staff, seeds you won’t find anywhere else, and did I say free shipping? This company is an absolute gem.

BOTANICAL INTERESTS, INC.

660 Compton St., Broomfield, CO 80020

www.botanicalinterests.com

877-821-4340 (customer service)

customerservice@botanicalinterests.com

horticulturist@botanicalinterests.com (for gardening questions)

Catalog: Print and online

Botanical Interests is a small, family-owned seed company that has won my heart with its operating philosophy: focus on products that align with principles of organic gardening and sustainability, give back to the community through seed donations and fundraising support, and most of all, make the seed packets as useful as humanly possible—and then also make them beautiful. The results are stunning: exquisite artwork on the front, essential

planting info on the back, and inside there is a complete foldout guide crammed with directions on when to harvest, recipes, history, easy growing tips, organic pest control, and more, all specific to that plant. So if by the time your seeds arrive you can't find the catalog you ordered from, everything you need to know is right at hand.

This same “be helpful” mandate is also apparent on the website. They offer a range of free, inspiring gardening information that is nothing short of astonishing. Blogs with recipes, growing guides searchable by specific plant, a glossary of terms, articles about every gardening technique and situation you could ever encounter. Here's just one example out of a bajillion: In the main Articles tab, there's a category called Edibles, and nestled there is an article titled “Edibles for Partial Shade.” After a general intro, this compact article then lists and links to ten leafy greens and ten herbs that can survive with as little as two hours of sun, and seven root crops, ten other vegetables, and thirteen herbs that can manage with just four sunny hours. Not all are ideal for containers, but that's where your wish list comes in.

Also very helpful are the curated seed collections—Microgreens, Baby Greens sampler, Basic Bounty vegetables (one herb and eight vegetables, most of which would do well in containers), and Container Vegetable collection, with container-appropriate varieties of ten popular veggies.

GARDENER'S SUPPLY

128 Intervale Rd., Burlington, VT 05401

www.gardeners.com

800-876-5520

Orders: 888-833-1412

Catalog: Print and online

With its strong focus on the “hardware” side of gardening, this employee-owned company is unique on our list but well worth your time to explore. Their catalog is a mind-boggling array of garden products: tools (many of them developed by in-house designers), supplies, raised beds, pots, planters (including some very handsome grow bags), supports, even some seeds and plants. Just as impressive is the amazingly broad offering of online education. Under the Advice tab on the home page, you will find scores of how-to articles, planning guides, and so much more. And if you don't find just what you need there, you can

use the online submission form to “Ask a Gardener” about anything garden related. The company has four proprietary retail stores, all in New England, and some of their products are carried in garden centers and home improvement stores nationwide.

GROWERS EXCHANGE

951 Techpark Place, Sandston, VA 23150

www.thegrowers-exchange.com

888-829-6201

Catalog: Online only

This company sells only herbs, and only as live plants, no seeds. The selection is large, and most plants are priced at between \$8 and \$10; shipping starts at \$8.95.

GROWJOY

www.growjoy.com

Catalog: Online only

A small, family-run operation that offers only plants, no seeds, all grown in their own greenhouses in Berne, Indiana. Navigate your way through their full selection of vegetables and flowers by exploring the grouping called “Plants for Productive Patios” under the “Shop by Purpose” subhead on their home page. Look for items that correspond to your personal wish list. Most of the plants are priced (in 2022) at \$6.95; orders more than \$50 ship free, otherwise a flat rate of \$14.99.

GURNEY'S SEED & NURSERY CO.

P.O. Box 4178, Greendale, IN 47025

www.gurneys.com

Phone orders: 513-354-1491

Customer Service: service@gurneys.com; 513-354-1492

Catalog: Print and online

Dating from 1866, this major garden company has been well-known to home gardeners for generations. Today its catalog features just about every kind of plant you could imagine: vegetables, herbs, fruits, flowers, perennials, shrubs, trees, as well as a good selection of tools and supplies. Of particular interest for us, a number of their vegetables are available as both seeds and live plants. With some experimenting, the best approach I found to identify these choices is this: ask the search bar for “vegetable plants” and quickly scan the results grid (it includes herb plants along with veggies). If there is a wide range of prices given for a certain item (such as \$3.99 to \$24.99), you’ll know they sell plants of that item as well as seeds. But you’ll also need your own wish list to zero in on varieties that work nicely in containers.

HARRIS SEEDS

355 Paul Rd., Rochester, NY 14624

www.harrisseed.com

800-544-7938

Catalog: Print and online

Since 1879, Harris has provided both home gardeners and commercial growers with vegetable and flower seeds and a wide range of tools and supplies for garden and greenhouse. Today’s container gardeners will find lots to choose from in the grouping labeled “container gardens” under the main Vegetable tab on the home page.

HUDSON VALLEY SEED COMPANY

4737 Route 209, Accord, NY 12404

www.hudsonvalleyseed.com

845-204-8769

mail@hudsonvalleyseed.com

From their website: We believe that a seed is more than meets the eye: it is a time capsule telling tales of the plants, crops, and people that came before us, and we work with a range of artists as diverse as our seeds to pass those stories down to present and future gardeners.

From me: That lovely sentence embraces the two pillars upon which this company proudly—and successfully—stands. First, a dedication to principles of sustainability, organic methods, and preserving seed diversity. Second, and every bit as important, a commitment to supporting art and storytelling. It's not your typical horticultural business plan, but it works beautifully.

For the seed part of the business, they carry a wide selection of seeds for vegetables, herbs, and flowers, including many edible flowers. All their seeds are open-pollinated (which means pollinated by natural forces, as opposed to controlled cross-pollination performed intentionally to produce new cultivars) and most are organic and heirloom. And all of this is supported with a generous range of garden tips and planting guides.

It's the art part that warms my heart. That ideal is put into practice with special seed packets they call Art Packs. Each one has an outer fold-open packet featuring original art on the front and a story about the plant and an introduction to the artist on the inside, then an inner packet with the seeds and planting directions. Each year, ten to twelve new plant introductions are illustrated by ten to twelve new artists, so that by now most of the catalog offerings are available in either Art Packs or standard packets. The cost differential is about 60 cents—a small price, in my opinion, for such charm.

JOHNNY'S SELECTED SEEDS

13 Upper Main Street, Fairfield, ME 04937

www.johnnyseeds.com

877-564-6697

Catalog: Print and online

Johnny's celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in 2023, a testament to the vision of founder Rob Johnston, who started off in a New Hampshire farmhouse attic at the age of twenty-two. Today, he and his wife still shepherd the company, now with one hundred-plus employees who are also owners of the business. From the beginning, Rob intended to offer seeds of unusual varieties, even when it meant producing the seeds himself. Today, Johnny's is widely admired for its extensive plant-breeding program, which over the years has introduced home gardeners to many new favorites, including numerous All-America Selections.

The easy-to-navigate catalog has well over a thousand varieties of vegetables, herbs, flowers, and fruits, plus an astonishing collection of garden tools and supplies, with everything you could ever need and some things you didn't even know existed. One caution: Johnny's supplies large-scale market gardeners, too, so be sure you're looking at a package size or quantity that fits your small-garden space. And I am completely blown away by the breadth of gardening information on their website. From the home page, open up the Grower's Library tab and prepare to be amazed. If you cannot quickly find something or have a problem, try their "Ask a Grower" feature; a real live person will respond.

KITIZAWA SEED COMPANY

201 Fourth St., #206, Oakland, CA 94607

www.kitazawaseed.com

seeds@kitizawaseed.com

510-595-1188

Catalog: Print and online

Founded by two Japanese brothers in 1917, Kitazawa is today the premier US source for seeds of Asian vegetables. Recently, in response to customer requests, they have also added varieties of Mexican vegetables, and all of them packaged in the distinctive Kitazawa style: simple manila envelopes with dark-green ink. The catalog is the same: no fancy graphics, just clear information about their many varieties, including several pages of recipes. I really admire their curated collections, called Chef Specialty Gardens. Currently, there are nineteen collections, with themes such as Baby Leaf Garden, Thai Garden, and Edible Flower Garden. Each one has seven different packets, a thoughtful mix of familiar and new-to-you varieties.

NICHOLS GARDEN NURSERY

1136 Main St., Philomath, OR 97370

PO Box 1299, Philomath, OR 97370

www.nicholsgardennursery.com

800-422-3985 (phone orders)

Catalog: Print and online

This well-respected nursery, founded in 1950, is family-owned and operated, now into the third generation. Known for high-quality seeds for vegetables, flowers, and herbs, along with garden tools and supplies.

PARK SEED

1 Parkton Ave., Greenwood, SC 29647

www.parkseed.com

info@parkseed.com (July and August only)

One of America's oldest and largest mail-order seed companies, Park dates from 1868, when fifteen-year-old George W. Park decided to earn some spending money by selling seeds from his own garden. At 154 years old and still going strong, the company provides vegetable gardeners the comfort of longtime favorites and the joy of new treats. The 2022 online catalog has seeds for 119 vegetable varieties that are appropriate for containers, including some very appealing mixes and blends. Put “container vegetable plants” in the search box. Also on the website, along with an impressive array of tools and supplies, is a rich selection of gardening articles, planting guides, tip sheets, and even recipes.

RENEE'S GARDEN SEEDS

6060 Graham Hill Rd., Felton, CA 95018

www.reneesgarden.com

888-880-7228

Catalog: Online only

Renee Shepherd, like several others included in this section, is one of my heroes. She is fiercely dedicated to offering gardeners the very best seeds, only the ones that deliver, as she puts it, “great flavor, easy culture, and exceptional garden performance.” When you explore her website, which I hope you will, look for the essay titled “How We Choose Our Seeds.” It’s an illuminating glimpse into the challenges all seed companies face as well as an inspiring personal manifesto.

But I have to warn you: being on the website can make you feel like you just walked into the world’s biggest candy store and have no idea where to start. This is especially true

for container gardeners, because as the website proudly exclaims, “Space-saving varieties are our specialty!” How you navigate through depends on your shopping style. If you’re that person who needs to look at every single style, shape, fabric, and color before deciding on a pair of socks, use this: reeneesgarden.com/collections/great-in-containers.

If you prefer a more focused approach, choose “Container Gardening” on the drop-down menu under Gardening Resources. That gives you a rich array of articles and instructional videos on various aspects of container gardening, but I suggest you start with the first item: “container specialty varieties.” It’s a comprehensive list of names of, and links to, seventy-four vegetables and herbs especially chosen for container-garden success; have your wish list handy. Even simpler, if you just want to get the darn socks *right now*, take a look at these two special collections, each containing five seed packets plus a planting guide: the Container Kitchen Garden collection (tomato, lettuce, chard, carrot, basil) and the Container Herb Garden collection (cilantro, basil, chives, dill, parsley).

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE SEED EXCHANGE

P.O. Box 460, Mineral, VA 23117

www.southernexposure.com

gardens@southernexposure.com

540-894-9480

Catalog: Print and online

As you might deduce from the name, this company specializes in varieties that perform best in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast. I sent a catalog to my brother in North Carolina a few years ago, and now he buys nothing else. But lots of their offerings are the garden standards that *all* gardeners rely on, regardless of their zone, and even for many of the plants we usually associate with hot climates, they often include varieties with early maturities, making them a reasonable bet for cooler regions. The vast majority of their seeds are organic, and many are also heirlooms. The website features a mind-boggling collection of Growing Guides: sixteen general and season-specific guides, nine guides on various aspects of seed saving, and sixty separate guides for individual vegetables.

TERRITORIAL SEED COMPANY

PO Box 158, Cottage Grove, OR 97424

www.territorialseed.com

541-942-9547 (customer service and gardening questions)

800-626-0866 (phone orders)

Catalog: Print and online

This family-owned company was founded in the Pacific Northwest by Steve Solomon, something of a legend among home gardeners who strive toward self-sufficiency. It has been owned since 1985 by Tom and Julie Johns, who, along with their seventy employees, remain dedicated to Steve's mission of helping gardeners produce an abundance of fresh-from-the-garden food. They offer both seeds and live plants, all of them trialed and grown at their own farms.

The selection of transplants is impressively broad, and a very respectable number of them are appropriate for containers. Put "container vegetable plants" into the home page search box, then use the menu on the left side to navigate to "product type" and choose "transplants." The 2022 catalog shows a total of thirty-nine vegetables that work in containers, and eighteen of them are available as transplants as well as seeds; that's a darned good start. On the website you'll find terrific information in the downloadable Growing Guides, with two general guides for seasonal growing and then forty-four individual guides for specific veggies.

TOTALLY TOMATOES

334 W. Stroud St., Randolph, WI 53956

www.TotallyTomato.com

800-345-5977

Catalog: Print and online

It's not *totally* in the sense of "all we do is tomatoes"; it's more like a teenager's imprimatur of awesomeness. Because their tomato selection is truly awesome, but they offer a lot more besides. From the 2022 catalog: seeds for 91 peppers, grouped into 5 categories from mild to superhot; seeds for 21 other types of vegetables, from broccoli to zucchini; and oh

yes, seeds for 396 tomato varieties, in 17 distinct categories, 2 of which are especially useful for container gardeners: Patio/Container Types (34 varieties) and Hanging Baskets (5 varieties). And that, my friends, is a lot of tomatoes. Altogether, there are more than twenty tomato varieties available as live plants, including two of the Roma type. Also plants for peppers, eggplants, and onions, if you're ready to expand your repertoire. And their selection of garden tools and supplies is especially well thought out.