

IN THE DIRT

Color Your Garden Rainbow

Vole damage to turfgrass appears as surface runways. The one to two inch wide runways consist of closely clipped vegetation due to vole feeding beneath snow over. These areas will recover by themselves as turfgrass begins active growth. In most cases, overseeding is not needed to repair vole damage to turfgrass.



'Kaleidoscope' carrot mix

If you're just a little bit bored with the same old round, red tomatoes, beets and radishes; or green snap beans, lettuce and zucchini squash, then liven up your garden with vegetables of a different color this year.

Most seed catalogues offer a widening variety of vegetables in unconventional colors and shapes. Though you probably don't want to give up all your old favorite standard varieties, you might want to try some of these novel varieties for a change of pace. Browsing through a selection of seed catalogues can turn up such fun vegetable surprises as those listed below.

Golden beets --- 'Burpee's Golden' beets taste delicious and golden colored flesh. Their greens are excellent cooked or in salads. (The Cook's Garden, Vermont Bean Seed Company)

Multicolored carrots and radishes

- 'Kaleidoscope Mix' carrots combine five vibrant colors – red, purple, yellow, white and orange - for a dazzling rainbow effect sure to be noticed at the dinner table. (The Cook's Garden)
- 'Park's Beauty Blend' radishes mix 5 varieties to give you peppery-crisp globes in brilliant purple, yellow, scarlet, pink and white. (Park Seed)

White cucumbers --- 'Crystal White Pickler Hybrid' produces bright white fruits with a crisp texture and sweet flavor. Early fruit production on these semi-bush plants. Cucumbers can be harvested small as baby gherkins or full sized. (Park Seed)

Orange cauliflower --- 'Cheddar Hybrid' cauliflower produces a glowing orange head, as a result of 25 times higher beta-carotene content than white cauliflower. Keep the heavy 4 to 7 inch heads untied for brightest color. (Park Seed)



'Cheddar Hybrid' cauliflower

Purple asparagus, kohlrabi, and cauliflower

- 'Sweet Purple' asparagus is higher in sugar and more tender than green asparagus types. Additional purple asparagus cultivars include 'Purple Passion' and 'Pacific Purple'. (Vermont Bean Seed Company, Park Seed)
- 'Early Purple Vienna' kohlrabi produces an apple-like bulb with mild delicate flavor. The outer skin is purple, but the inner flesh is creamy white with a crisp texture. (The Cook's Garden, Vermont Bean Seed Company)
- 'Graffiti' cauliflower produces big flavorful heads that deepen to purple in bright sun. When cooked, the heads turn mauve. Plants are vigorous and downy mildew resistant. (Park Seed)

Red basil

- 'Red Rubin' basil has large smooth leaves and grows to a full, dense plant. (Park Seed, The Cook's Garden)
- 'Crimson King' basil features brightly colored red foliage, with big flavorful Genovese-type leaves. (Park Seed)

Another way to spice up the garden is with less commonly grown crops, such as peanuts, okra, popcorn, Indian corn, broom corn, ornamental gourds, garlic, leeks, shallots and horseradish. Broom corn, *Sorghum bicolor*, produces corn-like kernels on a "tassel" or broom-like seed head. It's used primarily as an ornamental for fall decorations or dried arrangements.

Oriental vegetables are another possibility. As stir-frying has become popular, more catalogs are offering a selection of Oriental vegetables well suited to this use.

When trying new or odd varieties think small. Try one or two, or maybe three, new things per year, if you have space. Plant them in addition to your favorite standard varieties, so you don't risk your entire harvest if yield or quality is poor. If you find something you really like, you can enlarge your planting next year.

Source: Sarah Browning, Nebraska Extension Horticulture Educator

Last Friday of April is National Arbor Day 10 Rules for Planting Trees

These guidelines are the most current practices that are recommended for proper tree planting. It is tough being a tree in Nebraska, but following these procedures will provide a planted tree the best means of surviving and growing to maturity.



1. Selection is important — Select the right tree for the right place. Many serious problems can be avoided by proper selection decisions. Contact Diggers Hotline before you dig your planting hole.

2. Pre-planting care — Keep planting stock in shaded location and well watered. Do not get rough with the planting ball or container. If you have to hold a plant over, make sure it is moist and shaded. Keep in mind that when trees are transplanted from the nursery 90 to 95 percent of the root system is left behind.

3. On site and prior to planting remove all wires, labels, cords and anything else that may be attached to the plant.

4. Hole size and shape have become a very important factor. Do not skimp on the width of the planting hole. Plant slightly above nursery level. Place the plant on solid ground, not fill dirt. Be careful of drainage.

5. Remove all containers from the root ball prior to planting, even peat pots should not be left intact. It is best if wire baskets can be removed completely.

6. Backfill with loosened soil. Research shows that soil amendments are not necessary.

7. No need to fertilize at planting time. Remove only damaged or rubbing branches. Food production by the leaves is vitally important. Cutting back restricts leaf area and therefore food production.

8. Water the plant thoroughly, then two to three times per week for the first season.

9. Mulch around the tree. This is important. Natural composted mulch or wood bark is best. Do not use plastic sheeting. Two to four inches of mulch is ideal. Rodents may infest mulch if levels are deeper. Mulch should cover the ground to the drip line if possible and should not be placed against the trunk.

10. Stake only when necessary. If the tree is staked, allow for some movement but take care not to injure the bark. Staking is useful more for protection against people and lawn mowers. Remove stakes after one year.

Source: Nebraska Forest Service Community Forestry Program