Ordering from Mail Order Catalogs

At this time of the year, seed catalogs fill our mailboxes and cover our coffee tables. With the many new varieties and old favorites, it can be difficult to choose what to purchase. Here’s how I do it.

**Plan**--I usually start by reviewing my current garden space--annual, perennial and vegetable beds. Photos taken on a monthly basis in my garden are reviewed to look at color, texture, heights, etc. I jot down what I planted last year, what grew well, what didn’t survive, and what might make the garden more interesting or attractive this season. I then plan how the space will be used this year. For my vegetable garden I consider rotating crops to discourage disease and insect problems.

**Select**--One key factor I use in selecting plants is finding disease-resistant and insect-repellent varieties. Most catalogs do a nice job of describing the varieties and noting their favorable attributes. Be sure the catalog indicates the hardiness range for perennial plants (plants grown for more than one year). Because Kansas City is in zone 5, select plants rated for that zone. Evaluate different varieties, being cautious of claims that say, “repels mosquitoes,” or “grows well in any soil.” If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. The words, “vigorous grower” also may be a warning; it probably will outgrow your garden quickly.

**Order** from reliable companies. Become familiar with the guarantee and return policy of the mail-order company. Order early! Many companies have limited supplies and substitution policies, allowing the company to replace plants that run short. They normally ship seeds and garden supplies immediately upon processing your order. Most ship plant materials at the proper planting time for your area. Although many plants you
receive will arrive in dormant condition (or emerging from dormancy), this is natural to
the plant. Simply plant according to the directions included with your order.

Now you’re ready to plan, select and order your gardening supplies. Why not try
something new this season and share your success with friends.

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