



## The ZERO to 100 MILE eating Lifestyle

Our desire to eat and grow our own vegetables has led us to offering what we wanted to grow ourselves! Beautiful and Edible foods! We wanted coloured carrots, coloured beets and coloured radish. We wanted a large variety of greens to eat. We listened to your comments and focused on what you were buying as well, and now offer a great selection of unique, heirloom, organic vegetable and flower seeds.

Welcome to our first GROW Gourmet Newsletter – a celebration of food – from growing to eating. Take control of your food. We want to help you by offering the best selection of seeds, supplies and some advice to help you grow and enjoy them.

If you have a sunny spot in your garden or even a sunny balcony, you can take control of some of your food supply, and the rewards are amazing.

We had the privilege to tour the roof top garden at The Royal York Hotel in Toronto. They have a series of waist high garden boxes growing many of the herbs, tomatoes, edible flowers and other vegetables, all used in the hotel's restaurants.

Seeing such a successful garden on a usually desolate roof top was a real inspiration to grow our own gourmet vegetables and the start of our par taking in the 100 mile or less 'trend'. This trend is now becoming a lifestyle, which is healthier and much more environmentally friendly. A win win!

Rick

## The Carrot

*Daucus Carota*, our orange staple of life did not start out that way... Orange that is. Carrots, originally purple or white were hybridized in the early 1900's to create the vitamin rich orange carrots of today. Original heirloom carrots have been making a come back in the gourmet scene for a few years and finally we can grow them at home now too! **In a few cases we bought bulk seed from heirloom seed dealers and we packaged them ourselves just to offer some of these hard to find heirloom varieties.**

We offer one of our favorites "Carnival Carrot Blend". This has been a popular mix for the home gardener as you get a mix of red, purple, white, yellow and orange in the same pack. On top of the 8 or so wonderful orange varieties of carrots we are excited to offer more of the colours in individual packs; try Atomic Red for a great red colour and a hit of Lycopene in your diet, usually found in tomatoes – and they look dam good on the plate as well. We also offer Cosmic Purple, Amarillo – a sweet yellow carrot, and three white varieties – Snow White, Lunar White and White Belgian aka Blanch a Collet Vert. Some of the varieties are in limited quantities.

## You can't BEET our selection!

Beets are another easy to grow vegetable – a root vegetable and a garden green. We have loved eating beets fresh from the garden (and the root seller) all year! My favorite is the Chioggia or Candy Cane beet. These are red and white stripped as the name implies... they are so sweet after roasting you won't want candy again... even our dog Riley likes roasted beets. (roast beets in a 300-350 degree oven with some olive oil and thyme for an hour and a half or so – they should be fork tender)

The Chioggia beet is also part of the Gourmet Beet Blend we offer. You get red, yellow, white and the candy cane as part of the same pack – each picking you do is a surprise of colour but a consistent source of flavourful bulbs and greens!

Carrots need well cultivated soil, rich in compost and manure – even some sand if you have a lot of clay... you want to make sure the roots have somewhere to grow. Over seed carrots to ensure germination then thin out later as needed. Stagger your plantings so you will have carrots all summer through to fall. Let a batch of carrots get hit with frost a few times – yes FROST – frost turns the starches into sugars. This makes your carrots even sweeter than they were! STORAGE is easy, a plastic tub with a lid and some clean sand is what we used and storage in the cold room – not freezing (cellar or cold garage). We are still eating our own carrots in February and have enough for another couple of months – talk about knowing where your food comes from.

Other root vegetables – Rutabaga – White Vienna Kohlrabi – Purple Vienna Kohlrabi



As with the carrots I have sourced some standard and some hard to find beet varieties – about 10 varieties in total. Cylindrical beets have been a favorite of chef's. The consistent cylindrical shape makes cut pieces more uniform in size. We offer Cylindrical Red and Cylindrical golden beets. Bull's Blood (burgundy leaf), Detroit Dark and Early Wonder are favorite red varieties. If you don't like beets staining your hands try the Albino Beet, this all white variety is rare and hard to find. And finally we brought in the Mammoth Red Mangle Beet. This old heirloom variety is best for human consumption in the small to medium size, if you let it to grow it can hit 20 lbs! I'm going to grow a few big ones this year to see how they are—size and flavour! Some of our Chioggia last year got to the size of bowling balls and were still sweet and delicious.

## Swiss Chard

If you just like the beet greens, you should grow Swiss Chard. This is one truly beautiful and edible plant. Seeds are easy to sow and can mix it up in any sunny perennial bed as well as the veggie patch. Try the Bright Lights Blend for another colourful hit for your dinner plate and garden – this blend has stems in red, yellow, pink, white and orange. We also offer Fordhook Giant and Rhubarb Swiss Chard.



Kale, like Swiss Chard and Beet greens, is a vitamin rich green that is most beautiful and most tasty. Plant enough to consider thinning as little as sprouts or salad greens, or let them grow up and be the beautiful greens they are for stews and braising. Last year, our Italian Lacinato Nero Toscana Kale, better known, as Dinosaur Kale was stunning. This green can be used for its texture and green grey colour throughout the garden – use it as you would boxwood in a garden parterre! You will find Red Winter and Blue Scotch Curled as our other kale offerings. Use them all ornamentally or for your dinner.

### EAT YOUR SPINACH.

Use it fresh as sprouts or salad greens or cook them briefly in soups, pasta's or braises. We offer the classic Bloomsdale, Lavewa, Bordeaux, and Climbing Spinach, which is ornamental and edible. Very easy to grow.

## EAT YOUR PEAS!!!



Whenever mothers started saying that, must have been when they started serving peas from a can.

The best way to eat your Pea's is right out of the garden; no canning, no transportation... just pick and eat... sometimes in the garden as a snack! We have 7 varieties of Pea's; many heirlooms and organic, so sweet and delicious. Featuring: Green Arrow, Wando, Cascade, Sugar Snap, Shelling Progress #9, Little Marvel and Oregon Sugar Snow Pea varieties.

You can start peas early if your vegetable garden is already prepared, plant in stages for continued harvest – and give them room to climb, some 8'-10'

## Beans

We love our BEANS; some climbing, some bush and easy to grow! Succession planting is planting smaller sections every two weeks or so – this spreads out your harvest and extends your harvest season. If you don't, you will have lots of beans all at once. I have done it, along with many customers saying ... "there was too much at one time".

Another vegetable to colour-up your salads and dinner plates! Of course we have many varieties of tasty green beans as well as the ever-popular Yellow Pencil Pod Bean and the Royal Burgundy Purple Bean. One of the favorite green beans is Tavera, a French Haricot Vert gourmet bean.

Just blanch your beans in salted boiling water for a few minutes, shock in ice water bath and then enjoy in salads or sauté in a pan for a few minutes in olive oil and unsalted butter... hit them with some lemon juice and some fleur du sel sea salt and you will be a happy camper. DON'T overcook them, they should still have some firmness and crunch to them.



## LeTTuce TaLk

Almost nothing is easier to grow than your own gourmet salad greens. Either in the ground or a window box you could be eating your own greens all summer and into the late fall. Use kitchen scissors to cut them – don't pull them and they keep growing for a while so you get multiple cuttings. Stagger your plantings every two weeks until mid September or so. That's what we did last year and because of good weather through the fall we had salad greens until December. Spinach and kale are even more hardy than salad greens.

Mesclun is a salad mix of assorted small, young salad leaves which originated in Provence, France. The name comes from Provençal (Southern France) – mescla, "to mix" – and literally means "mixture". The traditional mix includes chervil, arugula, leafy lettuces and endive in equal proportions.

We offer many Mesclun mixtures. Baby Gourmet Blend, Valentine Blend (many red "greens" – no not the TV show), Rocky Top mix, European mix and Asian mix just to name a few! There is a mesclun or mixture for everyone from mild to spicy and green to red.

If you prefer to grow your gourmet salad greens by variety we carry those too. I always have plenty of my favorite green, Arugula handy to add to salads, pasta's and sandwiches. Other greens are Black Seeded Simpson, Royal Red, Oak Leaf Lettuce, Red Romain just to name a few.... There are more in the store!

A few other greens to highlight are the mustards, another beautiful edible green. There are also mild and spicy Micro Greens as well as Sprouting Seeds (about a dozen varieties) again too many to mention but we have lots in stock.



## RADISH

A crunchy, spicy treat for some – too strong for you? Don't eat them whole, cut them up and use them in salads and they are a nice crunchy delight. Cook your radish and the bitterness goes out – try to confit the radish – slow cook in butter or olive oil. A favorite radish yearly is the French Breakfast. But we also offer; Cherry Bell, Crimson Giant and the colourful Easter Egg Blend.

## ONE Potato TWO Potato THREE Potato FOUR



We will actually offer five varieties of Seed Potatoes for you to grow at home:

Russian Blue (with blue skin and blue flesh), French Fingerling (red skin with white flesh), Chieftain (with red skin white flesh), Caribe (with purple skin and white flesh), and Yukon Gold for yummy mashed potatoes.

We had a great potato harvest at home last summer. We still have some in storage and will probably get through another month or two without the need to purchase more.

Potatoes require full sun to grow. They are aggressively rooting plants and will produce the best crop when planted in a light, loose, well drained but moisture retentive loam. As always, add lots of compost and well-composted manure and you should be fine. We planted our potato bed in a mound; this helps with drainage, as potatoes don't like wet feet.

## Is Rhubarb a Vegetable or Fruit?

It's a vegetable that is used and prepared like a fruit. It is also a perennial here in Canada! Rhubarb is grown for its stalk only, the leaves are toxic and should be discarded—not in your compost.

Rhubarb gets to be about 2-3 feet wide and tall so you will need to designate that amount of space for each plant. Since Rhubarb is a perennial it is a good idea to start it in a well-prepared bed. As always add LOTS of organic matter!

Rhubarb grows in partial sunlight but prefers full sun.

Potatoes should be rotated on a 3-year program. This means, you need 3-suitable sites if you want to grow Potatoes every year. They must be planted in a different place each year, but after two years with other plantings, an area can be planted with potatoes again. Heavy soil amendment works if you do not have the space to rotate. Just add lots of fresh soil, manure, and compost. Bone meal, Blood meal, Fish Emulsion and Seaweed Emulsion are great natural fertilizers to feed the soil and feed the plants. We have those stocked in the store as well as worm poo, 2 kind of bat poo, chicken shit (can I say that?) and more.

If you plan to store Potatoes through the winter, you can plant a second crop as late as June 15.

Potato Planting Tip:

A week or two before your planned potato planting date, set your seed Potatoes somewhere where they will be exposed to some warmth and lots of light. This will induce them to begin sprouting. A day or two before planting, use a sharp, clean knife to slice the larger seed Potatoes into "seeds". Each seed should be approximately 1½-2 inches square, and must contain at least 1 or 2 "eyes" or buds. Smaller Potatoes may be planted whole. Leave outside and in the next few days, your 'seed' will form a thick callous over the cuts, which will help to prevent it from rotting once planted.

As with most perennial crops, don't harvest the first year. Allow the plant to establish itself. The second year you can take a small harvest. The third year you can harvest pretty much what you want. Leave some leaves for the plant to grow on for following years. Always cut off any seed heads that form, they take energy away from the plant.

CANADA RED Rhubarb is the variety we will get in later in March or April.

We chose this variety for two reasons 1) it's hardy here in Canada & 2) it has deep red stalks. The dark red colour holds up when cooked as well.

## Pumpkins, squash + gourds... not just for Halloween!

We have about 10 different varieties of Pumpkins this year, some huge, some small some blue and some Baby Boo – small white pumpkins that were not available last year are here again. Of course there are pie pumpkins but most varieties of pumpkins and winter squash can be used for "pumpkin" pie.

### WINTER SQUASH

We have heirloom Hubbard in green and blue – big, beautiful and delicious! The striped Cushaw is another heirloom that has recently been introduced again. We also offer a selection of smaller sized squash that are better for the small suburban garden.

Winter squash are easy to store for winter in a root cellar or cold but not freezing garage.

### SUMMER SQUASH

Zucchini's; white and yellow, Patti-pans, One Ball's, Eight Balls and more! Easy and fun to grow if you have a bit of room for spreading plants – horizontal or vertical.

Summer squash don't store like their 'Winter' cousins, so eat them up in season.

### ORNAMENTAL GOURDS

Popular for DIY crafters. Grow your own Swan gourds or Birdhouse gourds, bottle gourds and more. Let them dry and you can make crafts, bowls, and birdhouses depending on the variety.

Grow any of the squash & pumpkins in a raised bed rich in compost and composted manure. As many of you who compost know, squash that you threw away the previous winter occasionally grow right out of the composter!

Most pumpkin and squash seeds will not germinate in cold soil, and the plants are injured by light frosts. Planting should be delayed until the danger of frost has passed, approximately May 24 – June 7.





## Ain't Nothing But a CORN Dog

Riley sure loved the shade of the corn as he followed me around the veggie garden!



## Beautiful and Edible

### EDIBLE FLOWERS

Our favorite is the Nasturtium. Why you ask??? Well it is beautiful, easy to grow, comes in many different colours and is totally edible – the flower and the spicy tender leaves. Everybody should grow nasturtium somewhere both in the vegetable plot and flowerbeds. Nasturtiums also keep many garden pests away.

Nasturtium Mahogany has a gorgeous mahogany coloured (go figure) flower, my favorite. We also have, nasturtiums: Jewel Blend, Tall Single Blend, Peach Melba, Empress of India (red) and Alaska the variegated leaf variety.



## FEED The Earth

The main thing to do to become an organic gardener is to feed your soil by adding compost, composted manure, coir (coconut fibre) or peat moss. Peat is not the environmental choice.

Worms are attracted to the compost and manure as food, and work to aerate the soil, at the same time leaving worm castings – the most expensive organic compost to purchase! Attract worms and let them do the work for you.

Feed the Earth and it will feed you.

### GARDENING EDIBLES

To be a successful urban farmer all you need is a sunny spot and soil that has been tilled to a depth of at least 10-12". This is when you add all that compost goodness and mix it in well. Depth of planting is especially

important when growing root vegetables, they need loose rich soil to attain their best growth.

Grow your own to experience the heirloom varieties of a long forgotten flavourful past. Thanks to many seed savers around the world and the grow your own and eating local movements; old varieties are becoming more available to us. Many of these varieties have superior flavour but do not work in the grocery store chain world, because they do not travel well. They travel perfectly from your kitchen garden to the kitchen table.

### ADD A LOT OF COLOUR!

Many of the rare and heirloom seed varieties come in a wonderful array of colours. They change your eating experience not only in taste but in visual beauty as well. Feel free to dot these veggies around your perennial garden – they are edible and beautiful!

## TOMATO tomato!



No one can deny the refreshing taste of a fresh picked Tomato. The tomato seed selection we offer this year is very good. Make your selection by: Colours, Heirlooms, Organic, Cherry, Pear (low acid), Beefsteak and you will have the most beautiful ingredient for summer/fall enjoyment.

Start your tomato seeds a couple months before your last frost. The soil needs to be warm for the seed to germinate, so you can start them on a bright windowsill, a radiator that doesn't get too hot or on top of the refrigerator. A seed tray, some potting soil and a little water are all you need to start, and, of course, the seeds!

OH NO!!! SO MANY TASTY VARIETIES TO CHOOSE FROM

Our new favorite from last year is BORAGE! This beautiful edible plant has cucumber-tasting leaves used in salads and even making an iced tea. The flowers are a sought after blue colour and the bonus is they are a Bee magnet. This will help bring bees to your garden to pollinate. We planted seed in the zinnia bed and the vegetable garden and by the end of the summer they were at least 3 feet tall.

A few other Edible flowers are:

Calendula Orange Porcupine, Hyssop aka Anise Hyssop, English Lavender and Dwarf Hidcote Lavender

### Unusual EDIBLES

Amaranth Edible red leaf – a beautiful Heirloom green used like spinach

Pole Bean, Asparagus Long Yard – an Asian bean harvested when 12"-18" long!

# Anything GROWS

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