



Plan Your Garden Online

Beat the winter blues by using gardening websites and online catalogs to start your spring garden.

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January is the perfect month to begin planning your spring garden. This year, try ordering new plants online. As you wait for the soil to thaw so you can start growing this year's garden, chances are you are pining over the mail-order gardening catalogs pouring into your mailbox this month.

Because of the influx of gardening catalogs sent out in January, the Mailorder Gardening Association has aptly named this month National Mailorder Gardening Month. However, while many gardeners love curling up on the couch with their gardening catalogs to create their spring wish lists, gardening websites offer an alternative for placing orders.

"I love the seed catalog 'season,'" says Terry Lyle of New York, who has been gardening for 30 years. She looks forward to receiving the Pinetree Garden Seeds, Territorial Seeds, and Thompson and Morgan catalogs each year. "I absolutely love paper catalogs ... but I always order online. It's so easy and fun."

Canadian-born Amanda Hagarty, who now gardens from her home in Delaware, uses a mail-order gardening catalog to circle items for her wish list, but uses gardening websites when she places her order.

"It's easy, and the shopping cart does all the calculations for you so you don't have to get a calculator or rely on a likely underestimated guesstimate," Hagarty says. "I can also add as many things as I like to the cart and then take them off easily if I go over budget without messy scribbles or eraser marks."

To help you get the most out of your online ordering, MGA offers some useful tips:

Use online gardening catalogs to plan your spring garden and see what new plants are on the market this year.

Bookmark the plants, seeds, preplanned gardens, garden tools and garden accessories that you're interested in.

Review your flagged pages and compile a list of garden "must-haves."

Place your online order early. The most popular seeds, plants and new products often sell out quickly.

Keep a list of all the orders you've placed so you can track the deliveries as they come in.

Bookmark websites you order from so you can refer to them later. This way, you can easily contact a company for questions about your garden purchases.

Remember that most garden websites have helpful gardening experts that you can contact for additional gardening information and advice.

"There is no better way to beat the winter doldrums than to flip through a stack of mail-order gardening catalogs or visit online gardening sites," says Howard Kaplan, MGA president. "Garden catalogs show you new possibilities for your garden and also serve as time-saving planning tools."

If you would like more information about mail-order gardening, visit the MGA website.