



# *Spruce Cottage Farm's*

## *Periodic Newsletter*

*February 11, 2017*

*Greetings Gardeners,*

A very Happy New Year to all of you - may the coming year be full of tremendous harvests, terrific weather and time well-spent! We seem to be having a similar winter to last year, what with that warm spell in January. I wonder what the season ahead will bring? It would be hard to top the exceptional growing season we had last year, but I'd take something similar!

The seed catalogues have been steadily arriving and I have been happily perusing them: visions of seedlings and fresh veggies dancing before my eyes. Seed catalogues are a great source of information: germination requirements, transplant timings, specific varieties for disease resistance, plant spacing and growing tips. I always look for the Safe Seed Pledge at the beginning of the seed catalogue. This indicates that the seed company does not knowingly buy or sell genetically engineered seeds or plants. Given that the long-term effects of the mechanical transfer of genetic material between different species is unknown, I choose to support seed companies that take the Safe Seed Pledge.

Many of the plants that I grow for the nursery are open pollinated. Open pollinated seeds are produced by crossing two parent plants of the same variety to produce offspring (seeds) just like the parent plants. As a seed saver, these are the seeds I look for first, as I know that the seed I collect and save to grow the following season will be the same as the plants I was growing this season. Open pollinated varieties are usually classified as OP in seed catalogues. Hybrid seeds are produced by crossing two parent plants of different varieties within the same species. The resulting offspring (seeds) will have characteristics from both parents and these offspring will often have a higher yield or a shorter growing season or resistance to disease. The downside of hybrid plants is that seed saved and grown from these plants will revert back to one of its parents, resulting in unreliable results in terms of production and characteristics. Hybrid seeds are usually classified as F1 in seed catalogues (it is important to note the difference between hybrid and genetically engineered: hybrid seeds are crosses between the same species and genetically engineered seeds are the result of manipulating DNA between different species). It has been my experience that in some cases it is better to grow a hybrid variety (as in the case of Brussels sprouts and cauliflower) in terms of yield and days to maturity. In other cases, such as lettuce and carrots, an open pollinated variety is better than a hybrid. Some open pollinated seeds are also Heirloom or Heritage seed varieties. These are the tried and true varieties that have been around for hundreds of years - sometimes it's hard to argue with that!

I'm excited to announce that I am re-doing my website! It will be accessible over all platforms as well as easier to navigate. Plus it is going to be really pretty! I'll let you all know when it is live.

I'm looking forward to another season of fabulous flowers, vibrant vegetables and healthful herbs! My plant list and order form will be available by the end of February. In addition to being able to order your plants pre-season, the nursery will be open for retail sales in May and June, along with plants and produce at the Junction Community Market. I'll be sure to send out the opening date for the nursery!  
In growing harmony,

Jolene Billwiller

~ Gardening Maven ~



[jolene@sprucecottagefarm.com](mailto:jolene@sprucecottagefarm.com)

[www.sprucecottagefarm.com](http://www.sprucecottagefarm.com)

1 (867) 335-9769

P.O. Box 5498  
Haines Junction, YT  
Y0B 1L0