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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

HYBRID VEGETABLE VARIETIES

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Hybrid plant varieties have been around since the mid 1800s when the father of plant breeding, a monk named Gregor Mendel bred peas and recognized unique traits of the offspring. Hybrids are created by crossing specific parent plants with desirable traits through controlled pollination to create offspring called F1 hybrids. The characteristics of the resulting hybrids are very specific and consistent from plant to plant. The fact that parents must be hand-pollinated results in higher cost of hybrid seeds and plants.

Are they really worth the price?

To decide, check out these advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages of hybrid varieties:

- Hybrids possess wider adaptability to environmental stress
- Hybrid plants are more consistent from plant-to-plant
- Hybrids possess characteristics such as higher yields, earlier flowers and improved disease resistance
- Hybrids possess *hybrid vigor* meaning more plants survive the seedling stage, grow larger and stronger and have higher yields than open-pollinated plants

Disadvantages of hybrid varieties:

- Seeds cannot be saved from year-to-year because they will not produce the same plant the following year
- Some feel the taste of hybrids may not be as desirable as with open pollinated varieties

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When selecting hybrid varieties for disease resistance, take note of the following indicators located after the name of the variety on seed packets that indicate resistance to these diseases.

- V – Verticillium wilt is a fungus sometimes found in saturated soils which develops at an optimal soil temperature of 75 °F. This disease is normally found in greenhouses in north Idaho
- F – Fusarium wilt – Fusarium is caused by several fungi that are sometimes found in cool season areas, especially in northern Idaho.
- N- root knot nematodes are generally found in warm soils. These microscopic worms cause root stunting and damage from their feeding promotes infection by other soil-borne diseases.
- T – Tobacco mosaic virus (TMV) – TMV persists in soil for a long time and affects a wide range of plants. This virus can be transferred from tobacco to plants.

Mike Bauer is Extension Educator for Horticulture and Small farms in Bonner County.

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