

Varieties of unusual vegetables from Thrive Sustainability

Podcast with Laura Blishen

Golden Bantam corn is an heirloom variety dating back to 1902. It was grown by William Chambers, a Massachusetts farmer who selected it to be early and sweet. This variety produces sweet and tender cobs with kernels that are slightly larger than the more modern varieties. This vigorous variety will still grow well in cooler conditions so good for those in the cooler temperate areas with shorter seasons.



Country Gentleman corn is a unique heirloom sweet corn variety that is known for its distinctive kernels. Unlike traditional sweet corn, which has rows of kernels, Country Gentleman corn has irregularly spaced kernels on its ears. It is also called shoepeg corn. This variety is prized for its tenderness and sweetness, with kernels that melt in your mouth. Each plant may develop three or more ears of corn with irregularly spaced kernels, not in rows. It is a heavy yielder, often growing more than one ear on a stalk.



Corn - Oaxacan Green

Oaxacan Green is a Mexican Heirloom dent-type corn that produces ears up to 7–10 inches. Ears contain varied shades of green which are sought after for decorative purposes. Its stalks are vigorous and can reach about 2m tall. Oaxacan Green Dent corn is classified as a grain corn, as opposed to a sweet corn. Grain corn, also referred to as field corn, dry corn or Indian corn, has a higher starch content and lower sugar content, making it ideal for cornmeal, animal feed. It is ideal for making authentic green tortillas!



Corn – Glass Gem

A flint or popcorn that can grow kernels in a beautiful range of translucent colours. A good variety for popping corn or for milling into cornmeal, flour, or hominy. Its origin traces back to Carl Barnes, a part-Cherokee farmer living in Oklahoma.



Tomato – Rams horn

An heirloom Roma type variety which produces medium to large sized, unusual, horn-shaped red fruit. High yielding and great for both sauces, preserve and fresh in salads.



Tomato – Riesetomate

A rare climbing variety that forms clusters of joined tomato segments with sweet acidic flavour and a thick skin. The name Riesetomate translate as “traveller’s tomato” given because it can be torn apart on a journey one piece at a time.



Tomato - Wapsipicon peach

A unique variety with yellow, fuzzy, peach-like skin. The flavour is sweet, spicy and fruity.

It is named after the Wapsipinicon River in northeast Iowa.



Tomato- Indigo rose

A stunning looking tomato, this variety produces bountiful crops of small fruit with Indigo shoulders that darken to deep purple as it ripens and the base turns red. Produces and performs well in hot conditions.



Lucid gem

A beautiful bi-coloured beefsteak type tomato that ripens from yellow to a deep yellow/orange with dark anthocyanin stains as they mature. It is a vigorous plant that handles high temperatures. It is juicy, sweet and full of flavour.



Runner Bean - Scarlet Emperor

A vigorous climbing bean that produces masses of scarlet red flowers followed by long sweet beans. In frost free areas it can be grown as a perennial. It will die back during the cooler months and reshoot from the base the next season. Also known as Seven Year Bean and Multiflora Bean.



Bean – Purple King

A prolific, climbing variety that has straight, flat, purple pods that turn dark green when cooked. Sometimes called the magic bean as it changes colour when cooked.



Beetroot – Bullsblood

This Heirloom variety has a delicious sweet dark red root and is also commonly grown as a baby leaf and micro-green variety due to its attractive red leaves.



Carrot - Black Nebula

A beautiful dark carrot with a white core. It retains a wonderful sweetness raw or cooked. It is ideal for juicing, producing a pink juice which has a sweet taste and is high in antioxidants. Can be used a natural dye.



Pea- Purple podded

'Purple Podded' is an attractive heirloom pea with purple-pink flowers followed by purple pods filled with bright green, plump peas. It is a vigorous climber to 1.5 m high. The whole pod can be eaten when young, or use it as a shelling pea, fresh or dried.



Silverbeet/ Swiss chard

This is not unusual but is a really valuable and easy crop to grow. Silverbeet, also known as Swiss chard, is a leafy green vegetable that is highly nutritious and flavourful. The plant has large, dark-green, crinkled leaves with a fleshy white or coloured stem. The coloured stems can vary from deep red to yellow. Silverbeet is a cut-and-come-again leafy vegetable that should be a staple in every garden. It is easy to grow and has a long harvest window, so you can enjoy the delicious leaves for months on end.



Egyptian walking onions

AKA Tree Onions or Perennial Onions.

Growth starts like a regular onion at the top of the plant, then a cluster of bulblets/topsets will begin to grow and reach maturity in summer. When the topsets become heavy enough, they will pull the plant over to the ground. If the soil conditions are right, the fallen topsets will take root and grow into new Egyptian Walking Onion plants, hence the name, "Walking Onion". In the ground, the base of the Egyptian Walking Onion plant produces a small shallot-like onion which can be harvested. If left in the ground, the onion will divide and form a cluster or clump of onion bulbs. Grow in well drained loamy soil ensure they do not dry out or burn during the hot summer months.



Kohlrabi is a cruciferous vegetable that belongs to the Brassica family and is related to cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower. Unlike its relatives it is not grown for the head (flower buds) but for the bulbous stem that can be eaten raw or cooked. It has a unique sweet nutty, cabbage like flavour. The swollen stem segment grows just above the soil surface. Leaves can also be cooked.



Cauliflower – Purple Sicily

Italian heirloom that produces purple florets with a mild, sweet flavour. The head cooks to green, but also tastes great raw. This variety has the added advantage of being less appealing to brassica pests.



Broccoli Romanesco

Romanesco is an Italian heirloom variety that was first documented in Italy in the 16th century. Its crisp, beautiful apple-green heads form spirals of swirling green cones that form a fascinating fractal pattern.



Broccoli - Spigariello Liscia

Also known as Leaf Broccoli, this southern Italian heirloom variety has a flavour between broccoli and kale. A tender crunchy vegetable that produces over a long season and that is heat tolerant and well suited to warm climates.



Broccoli Raab – Spring Rapini

A vegetable popular in Italy, grown for its tender stems, leaves and small sized heads. It is incredibly nutritious and has a stronger flavour than regular broccoli. Wonderful sautéed with garlic with a squeeze of lemon juice. It is thought it originated as a wild plant in the Mediterranean or Asia before being cultivated.



Turnip Gold ball

Turnip Gold ball is a French heirloom variety growing to 7-10 cm with a sweet, mild flavour and a hint of nuttiness. Stores well and can be used at various stages of maturity.



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