

🔍 QUICK REFERENCE: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

On Seed Packets & Catalog Descriptions

✦ LOOK FOR (These Are Good Signs):

- **Heirloom label:** "Open-pollinated heirloom" or "heritage variety"
- **Disease resistance codes:** F (Fusarium), V (Verticillium), T (Tobacco Mosaic Virus). These mean the plant resists common problems!
- **Days to maturity:** Shorter = faster harvest. Perfect if you have a short growing season.
- **Flavor notes:** "Sweet," "rich," "tangy" — these varieties are worth growing!
- **Special traits:** "Cold hardy," "shade tolerant," "disease resistant" = adapted to YOUR conditions.

✗ AVOID (Red Flags):

- **No maturity date listed:** How will you know when to expect harvest? Pass.
- **GMO label:** "Genetically Modified" — most home gardeners avoid these.
- **Vague descriptions:** If the packet doesn't tell you much, it's probably not special.
- **Overly expensive:** Quality heirloom seeds are worth the cost, but compare prices across vendors!
- **Old seed packets:** Check the date. Last year's seeds might not germinate well.

🔍 HEIRLOOM VS. HYBRID AT A GLANCE

✦ Quick Decision Guide

- **Choose HEIRLOOM if:** You love unique flavors, want to save seeds for next year, enjoy trying heritage varieties, and don't mind potentially lower yields.
- **Choose HYBRID if:** You want guaranteed disease resistance, reliable high yields, perfect size/shape consistency, and don't plan to save seeds.
- **Best approach:** Mix & match! Plant a few heirlooms for flavor and a few hybrids for reliability. You'll discover YOUR favorites!
- **Don't confuse:** Hybrid ≠ GMO. Hybrids are natural crosses. GMOs have DNA altered in a lab. Most home garden seeds are NOT GMO.

🔍 TRUSTED SEED SOURCES

Popular Heirloom Specialists:

Seed Savers Exchange, Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, Johnny's Seeds, Territorial Seeds, Park Seeds (mix of both types)

Good Hybrid/Mainstream Options:

Johnny's Seeds, Burpee, Park Seeds, Botanical Interests, High Mowing Seeds

Pro Tip:

Compare prices across 2-3 vendors before ordering. Shipping costs add up! Buying locally supports your community too.

✦ The Golden Rule of Seed Shopping

There's no "wrong" choice between heirloom and hybrid! Both grow amazing food. Start with varieties that excite you (flavor, color, reputation), match your growing zone and season length, and align with your priorities (yields, uniqueness, disease resistance). After a season, you'll know what works best for YOUR garden. That's how you become a savvy seed shopper!