

Selecting Seeds For Next Year Is In Season

URBANA, ILL.

As the winter months draw nearer, it is time to start thinking about selecting seed for next year. Following a few guidelines while selecting your seed could make a big difference.

Firstly, do not simply select varieties based on yield. As a pathologist, Dr. Loretta Ortiz-Ribbing, University of Illinois Extension Specialist in Macomb strongly encourages using one of the best management tools – purchasing high quality, certified seed that carries resistance to the disease problems in your fields. Certification tags verify that seed is a particular variety and purity, and that it has met certain minimum quality standards such as germination. In this time of sky-rocketing seed costs, lower priced seed may seem like a bargain but if lower quality seed is bought, and germination is poor, it may not be so economical in the long run. Genetic purity can also refer to the genetic traits the seed carries. With all the traits available, remember you still have some choice. For example, if you don't have the insect problem in your area, it may be more prudent not to purchase or pay for seed with that trait. Non-GMO seed with a good disease resistance package may also be an economical option if it offers a price premium.

Secondly, purchase seed that carries resistance to diseases that need managing or ones that have been chronic problems in your field. Disease resistance is the most effective and economical management tactic for disease control in agronomic and horticultural crops. High levels of resistance toward many diseases may be found among commercial corn hybrids, soybean and wheat varieties, and many vegetable cultivars. Resistant lines usually offer adequate protection to help prevent significant yield losses that could occur by potentially important diseases in a geographical area.

Consider disease prevalence in your field for

the past several growing seasons and select hybrids, varieties, or cultivars with resistance to those diseases, as well as other common diseases, and insects. Most corn hybrids carry resistance to several common leaf blights such as northern corn leaf blight and southern corn leaf blight. If you typically have problems with gray leaf spot, selecting a corn hybrid with resistance is critical, especially if you plan to plant corn on corn.

Soybean varieties can carry resistance to several races of *Phytophthora* and soybean cyst nematode, as well as brown stem rot. Sweet corn hybrids carry a host of resistance to many diseases including Stewart's wilt and common rust. Resistant cultivars are available in cabbage for black rot, tomato for bacterial wilt, and cucurbits for some viral diseases. Disease resistance is also available in many small grain and forage crops. Check with your seed dealer for the specific resistance that a hybrid, variety, or cultivar carries. Then consider personalizing your resistance to the field that you are planting.

If you find a hybrid or variety that has resistance but want to know its yield potential you can check the University of Illinois variety trial results for corn, soybean, small grains, and forage crops online at <http://vt.cropsci.uiuc.edu/>. The Varietal Information Program (VIPS) for soybeans provides variety information and regional analysis of yield, protein, oil, and disease resistance rankings for more than 600 soybean varieties. This information can be found at <http://www.vipsoybeans.org>. Vegetable producers can check out the quality and yield characteristics of vegetable cultivars in the Midwest Vegetable Trials Report that is compiled annually as a collaborative effort between multiple researchers in the Midwest and surrounding states. The link is: <http://www.hort.purdue.edu/fruitveg/reports.shtml>. Δ