

NEWS RELEASE

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Selecting Seeds to Plant

Garden catalogs arrive daily and many companies' direct shoppers to their website. One newer aspect for many of these companies is a pledge to not have GMO seeds. This abbreviation represents genetically modified organism.

Genetically modified seeds are engineered in laboratories to put known desirable traits into a plant. The trait may be beneficial to the producer by making the crop better during drought, heat or cold tolerant, herbicide resistant or detrimental to insect pests. Some beneficial consumer engineered traits have been increased nutritional value, an allergen removed and longer shelf life.

No one is currently selling genetically engineered seeds to home gardeners. Home gardeners may never be able to purchase them. Farmers are not allowed to keep any GMO seed that they produce for planting. The seed company wants to keep its cash flow. It is hard enough to monitor commercial producers let alone millions of home gardeners.

In a good way, this keeps diversity in the environment. We all don't want to be growing the same thing and have something occur that would wipe out every ones crop. For example, many American elm trees were planted and Dutch elm disease took out almost all of them.

There are a handful of specialty crops licensed for planting that we could grow. Sweet corn is the most common. Potatoes, squash and apple are the others. Papaya is another crop but we can't grow it here anyway.

The most widely planted GMO crops are corn, soybean and cotton. Some of these have been used for 20 years. It takes about 15 years to go from development to being available to plant. Add those up and they have been around 30 plus years.

Today, the use of heirloom, hybrid and GMO crops are producing the food and fiber that we need for our use. No doubt, it will continue to change as the population continues to increase but land area does not.

You can find out more information on this and other horticulture topics by going to the Riley County, K-State Research and Extension website at [www.riley.ksu.edu](http://www.riley.ksu.edu). Gregg may be contacted by calling 785-537-6350 or stopping by 110 Courthouse Plaza in Manhattan or e-mail: [geyeston@ksu.edu](mailto:geyeston@ksu.edu).