

# A seed shortage may come in 2010

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By SUSAN REIMER THE BALTIMORE SUN

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Will there be a shortage of vegetable seeds for gardeners in 2010?

It is possible, says Barbara Melera, owner of the oldest seed house in the country, D. Landreth Seeds, formerly of Baltimore and now of New Freedom, Pa.

After back-to-back good years — 2008's salmonella scares and 2009's poor economy send homeowners into the garden to grow their own food — you might expect a backslide in seed sales, Melera said. New gardeners get discouraged or bored.

But, she said, "In 2009, we had the worst growing season in 50 years." Rain and disease destroyed crops and with them, the seeds for next year's garden.

"Onion sets. And a cucumber seed shortage," she predicted. "We are being told that the cucumber harvest was catastrophic, attacked late in the season by woolly mildew. There was fruit, but no viable seeds inside.

"We are being told that many, many varieties simply won't be available."

Likewise, Europe had a terrible harvest this year, and Europeans purchased much of their produce from the United States, taking with it the seeds.

And, as further proof that we are in a global marketplace, Europeans and Australians have taken a fancy to eating sprouts — tons of sprouts.

"When you grow vegetables just to get the sprouts, nothing gets to fruit. And they are consuming gigantic quantities of seeds just for the purpose of sprouts."

Word of possible shortages must be leaking out, Melera said, because retailers are telling her they had their best December in years.

It is certainly true that vegetable gardeners are ordering seeds earlier and earlier, but Melera said she thinks it is more likely that gardeners are acting out of fear of shortages.

It would be a shame, she said, if the young gardeners for whom it is just becoming a passion should face such a setback.

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/gardening/features/6809275.html>