

Cuttings

December 21 is the shortest day of the year, and this year, the darkest and gloomiest . . . until the first Seed Catalogue arrived at noon. Then I realized, again, how fortunate I was to be a gardener. I love looking at seed catalogues. As my mouth watered over Caspian Pink tomatoes and Catalina spinach (a powerhouse of iron), and my eyes goggled at 40cm Inca Marigolds, I thought of rich, brown, raked beds and the patterns to make with new seeds. It took me back to public school and the clean, white, right-hand page in workbooks. The left-hand pages were always mussy, because writing on the previous page which always went from top to bottom without spaces, showed through (students of the WW II era could certainly tell Boards of Education how to save money). On a new page the liner's guidelines were black and clear, the paper smooth and it was a pleasure to make a new start, however faulty the subsequent work

More catalogues have arrived. The National Garden Bureau tells me that 2005 is the Year of the Sweet Pea and the year of the Melon. Still to come is the name of the Perennial Plant for 2005 to help deprived gardeners think beyond house plants, like Cactus.

One of the cactus that judges were told to buy three years ago, to increase their experience and knowledge, fell off the kitchen window sill into a pan of soapy water. "That's the end of that" I thought happily because, although I find cactus fascinating to observe, they bore me to distraction growing in the house. The thing is, they don't grow; they just sit and prickle. This cactus has since brightened up considerably - old dishwater a new discovery in Cactus care?

Herbs grow. They have fragrance; they are edible; they have

histories and that is why we asked for some herb stories and have been blessed with replies.

Gardeners have many more things than catalogues to be thankful for in 2005 and perhaps the chief one is that here in Canada, unlike Southeast Asia, we still have gardens and houses and families. *Ed*

