The Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants collects, preserves and distributes historic and native plant varieties and strives to promote greater appreciation for the origins and evolution of garden plants. Many of these historic seeds and plants are available for purchase online or on-site at Monticello.

Gardeners at the Center have selected their top five seeds to sow in late summer and early fall.

**1. EARLY SCARLET GLOBE RADISH**

Radishes, like lettuces, were regularly grown in the Monticello Vegetable Garden for use in salads. Jefferson preferred the scarlet radish, although his garden also included salmon, rose, violet and white types.

**2. SWISS CHARD “MIXED COLORS”**

“White beet,” another name for leaf beet or Swiss chard, was sown in the Monticello Vegetable Garden in 1774. While this variety was most likely a green leaf with white ribs, leaf beet has long been known to come in “many and variable colours,” as noted by 16th-century herbalist John Gerard.

**3. ARUGULA**

Salad greens were important in early American diets because they provided nutrients and flavor. Grown since the 16th century, arugula can be eaten young and tender in salads or mixed into pasta and rice dishes.

**4. POT MARIGOLD**

Seeds of this hardy, cool-season annual were planted at Shadwell, Jefferson’s boyhood home, in 1767. This self-seeding species with single yellow and orange flowers has been used for culinary and medicinal purposes since the Middle Ages.

**5. NASTURTIUM**

Nasturtium was often grown as an edible plant in the 18th century, as seen by its inclusion in Jefferson’s vegetable garden. The young leaves and flowers can be enjoyed in salads, and the seeds can be pickled like capers, just as they were in Jefferson’s day.

See the entire selection of seeds for vegetables, herbs, annuals and perennials at monticelloshop.org.

The Center for Historic Plants’ seed packet artwork by Virginia-based artist Tim O’Kane was made possible by a generous donation from Teresa and Ken Wood.