Is Some German in Your Garden? submitted by Mary Robsman

The following article “Go German in your garden” by Edie Adam, Partner Zeitung editor, came to RVGS German Interest Group from the International German Genealogy Partnership. Our group is a partner:

It was a sunny, warm day that hinted at the arrival of spring, and the local garden club was having a meeting at the library. The pile of garden catalogues was irresistible. The catalogs were featuring heirlooms, those plants “grown and maintained by gardeners and farmers, particularly in isolated or ethnic minority communities.” So it wasn’t surprising to find a number of plants connected to German-speaking areas and immigrants. For family researchers, the plants preserve a history just as valuable as documents and DNA. They take you into your immigrant ancestors’ kitchens. (The topic might make an interesting program for your local society, too!)

The following plants are offered in catalogs from Seed Savers Exchange and Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds. Both companies have a mission to collect heirlooms in order to preserve them for future gardeners. Those marked with an * are available from Seed Savers. Those marked with two ** may be ordered from Baker Creek.

**Cabbage**
Premium Late Flat Dutch was introduced into the U.S. by German immigrants around 1840.*

**Cucumber**
The Russian Pickling cucumber is believed to have been brought to Hutchinson County, South Dakota, by the Black Sea Germans in the 1870s.*

**Kale**
The great-grandparents of Irene Kemper of Nebraska brought Smooth German kale when they emigrated from Germany.*

**Ground Cherry**
Maria Loewen Regehr brought this to Canada from Russia in 1925. It’s now called the Loewen Family Heirloom Ground Cherry.*

**Hinkelhatz Pepper**
The Pennsylvania Dutch have grown the Hinkelhatz pepper since the 1880s. The name translates as “chicken heart.”**

**Derksen Pepper**
Donated by the Derksen family; it came to the U.S. from Russia in the 1850s with German Mennonites who settled near Mountain Lake, Minnesota.*

**Schwartzenbeeren**
Brought to Kansas by Volga German immigrants about 1875, and still used in such traditional recipes as Kuchen, Maultaschen, Klump and Knebel.**

**German Pink Tomato**
This Bavarian original was introduced to America in 1883 by Michael Ott, great-grandfather of Seed Savers Exchange co-founder Diane Ott Whealy.**