

Ice Out – Seeds In

A view of the Seed World from Central Maine

Its official: The majority of lakes in Maine are officially at Ice Out; the only stubborn exception being Lake Mooselookmeguntic (go ahead, try to say that again...) which still has a bit of ice as of April 21. Yes, there is an actual, official agency monitoring this important event all over the many bodies of water in Maine.

Ice Out is when it is time to get seeds started for that perfect dream garden here in New England; and if you're like most folks here at Johnny's Seeds, you already have the visuals in your mind for your personal cache of tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, corn, and brightly colored peppers.

The greenhouse crew here at Johnny's has been busy starting the seedlings for the Johnny's Trial and Research farm; tens of thousands of seedlings are in the works, in crops ranging from *Agrostema* to *Zinnia*, from *Abelmoschus esculens* to *Zea Mays*.

We all of course have our own favorites, and are just a little bit proud to be picky about which specific varieties of each crop is our own personal favorite. I am admittedly a *cucurbita maxima* 'snob'. I spotted some basil started in an empty tuna fish can on a coworker's desk the other day. One unique thing about Johnny's employee-owners is our propensity to be seed hoarders, especially in the QA seed lab. There is no known cure for this phenomenon. We can't help but be prone to it.

This is also the time of year our seed lab handles samples of a very wide assortment of crops; and I am personally very proud of our Seed Analysts' prowess at keeping track of all the various test methods and germination techniques. Johnny's offers over 2000 different seeded items for sale, from flower seed lots that look like dust to fava beans. I have nothing but respect for our entire operations crew at Johnny's at properly handling the wide variety of crops that we purchase, test and repackage.

The research farm is starting to take shape again, with beds being prepared for all of the trials. I asked our seasoned Farm Manager about how many times a stray moose had perhaps made their mark, not necessarily in a good way, on our trial fields.

One incident in 1988 is the only one of record with an actual citing of the Bull Moose, who had unfortunately put the recently installed "deer fence" to the test. The results confirmed that a deer fence is essentially child's play for a Bull Moose. That particular moose had a nice snack of several large areas of a field planted with soybeans.

Ice out, seeds in. Get out there and get things going! The soil is calling us all.

Bonita Nicolas, Quality Assurance Manager for Johnny's Selected Seeds