



Colorado MASTER GARDENER

Vegetable Planting Guide

no. 7.850*by D. Whiting, C. Wilson, and C. O'Meara¹*

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Cool-Season Vegetables

These vegetables prefer cool growing temperatures (60 to 80 degrees F) and lose quality in hot weather. They are often replanted midsummer for fall harvest.

Hardy Vegetable

(broccoli, cabbage, kohlrabi, onions, lettuce, peas, radish, spinach, turnips)

These vegetables grow with daytime temperatures as low as 40 degrees F and may survive a frosty nip.

When to plant:

- Based on soil temperatures
- Plant as soon as soil adequately dries in the spring.
- These crops may be planted as early as two to four weeks before the date of the average last spring frost.

Semi-Hardy Vegetables

(beets, carrots, cauliflower, parsley, parsnips, potatoes, and Swiss chard)

These vegetables grow with minimum temperatures of 40 to 50 degrees F, but are less tolerant of a frosty night.

When to plant:

- Based on soil temperature.
- Plant as soon as soil adequately dries in the spring.
- These crops may be planted as early as zero to two weeks before the date of the average last spring frost.

Warm-Season Vegetables

These crops require daytime temperatures above 60 degrees F. They prefer summer-like weather with temperatures between 70 and 95 degrees F. They are intolerant of frost and may be sensitive to cool spring winds.

Tender Vegetables

(beans, celery, corn, cucumbers, New Zealand spinach, summer squash)

When to plant:

- Based on soil temperature.
- Soil is adequately dry to work.
- These crops may be planted (from seed) around the date of the average last spring frost. Transplants of cucumbers and summer squash should be delayed until the time listed for the very tender group below.

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Very Tender Vegetables

(lima beans, cantaloupe, eggplant, pepper, pumpkin, winter squash and pumpkins, tomato, and watermelon)

These crops are not only intolerant of frost, but also cool spring winds. A week of daytime temperatures below 55 degrees F may stunt the crop.

When to plant:

- Based on soil temperature.
- Soil is adequately dry to work.
- These crops are typically planted two plus weeks after the average last spring frost date.
- Weather is becoming summer-like, (i.e., consistently above 55 degrees F (daytime) and breezes should have lost any cool nip.

Table 1. Vegetable Planting Guide.

Vegetable	germination temperature ¹			plant spacing ²	planting depth	days to germination	typical days to harvest	age of transplant (weeks)
	min.	optimum	max.					
Cool Season Crops ³								
Beets	40°	80°	90°	4-6"	¾-1"	7-10	60	
Broccoli ⁴	40°	80°	90°	18"	½"	3-10	65T ⁴	5-7
Cabbage ⁴	40°	80°	90°	18"	½"	3-10	85T ⁴	5-7
Carrots	40°	80°	90°	2-3"	¼"	10-17	70	
Cauliflower ⁴	40°	80°	90°	18"	½"	3-10	65T ⁴	5-7
Kohlrabi	40°	80°	90°	7-9"	½"	3-10	50	
Leeks	40°	80°	90°	4-6"	¼"	7-12	120	
Lettuce (leaf types)	35°	70°	70°	7-9"	¼"	4-10	60	
Onion, green	35°	80°	90°	2-3"	¼"	7-12	60	
Onions, dry (seed sets)	35°	80°	90°	4-6"	¼"	7-12	110	
Parsnips	35°	70°	90°	4-6"	1-2"			
Peas	35°	70°	90°	5-6"	½"	15-25	70	
	40°	70°	80°	4-6" or 3" x 8"	1"	6-15	65	
Potatoes	45°			12-15"	4-6"		125	
Radish	40°	80°	90°	2-3/2"	½"	3-10	30	
Spinach	40°	70°	70°	4-6"	½"	6-14	40	
Swiss Chard	40°	85°	95°	7-9"	1"	7-10	60	
Turnips	40°	80°	100°	4-6"	½"	3-10	50	
Warm Season Crops								
Beans, snap	55°	80°	90°	6" or 4" x 12"	1-1½"	6-14	60	
Cantaloupe ⁵	60°	90°	100°	36-48"	1-1½"	3-12	85	2-3 ⁵
Corn	50°	80°	100°	12" x 30"	1-1½"	5-10	60-90	
				9" x 36"				
Cucumbers	60°	90°	100°	6" trellised 24-36"	1"	6-10	55	2-3 ⁵
				untrellised				
Eggplant	60°	80°	90°	18-24"		7-14	60T ⁶	6-9
Pepper	60°	80°	90°	15-18"		10-20	70T ⁶	6-8
Tomato	50°	80°	100°	trellised: 24" between plants		6-14	65T ⁶	5-7
Squash, Summer	60°	90°	100°	36-48"	1-1½"	3-12	50	2-3 ⁵
Squash, Winter	60°	90°	100°	36-48"	1-1½"	6-10	100	2-3 ⁵
Watermelons	60°	90°	110°	36-48"	1-1½"	3-12	85	2-3 ⁵

- 1. Germination temperature** – Soil temperature is one of the best methods to determine spring planting time. Plant when soils reach minimum temperature measured at 8 a.m., 4 inches deep. Beans are an exception, being measured at 6 inches deep. Optimum temperatures listed in the table are useful for starting seeds indoors. Maximum temperatures are listed in regards to high soil temperatures that may interfere with seed germination in the summer.
- 2. Plant Spacing** – Spacings given are equal distance spacing for crops grown in block or close-row style beds. For example, beets, with a spacing of 6 inches are thinned to 6 inches between plants in all directions. In other words, beets are thinned to 6 inches between

beets in the row and 6 inches between rows. The closer spacing listed should be used only on improved soils with 4 to 5 percent organic matter. Close-row or block style planting works well for raised bed gardening, with blocks/beds 4 feet wide (any length desired) and 2 foot wide walkways between blocks/beds.

3. **Cool Season Crops** – Cool season crops prefer a cool soil. Lawn clipping and newspapers make an excellent mulch for these crops by cooling the soil, preventing weed germination and conserving water. Apply fresh grass clippings only in thin layers (less than ½”) and allow it to dry between applications. Thick layers will mat and smell. Do not use clipping from lawns treated with weed killers or other pesticides. Several layers of newspapers covered with grass clippings also work well between rows. Do not use glossy print materials.
4. **Transplanted Cole Crops** – Since cole crops (cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts) germinate better in warmer soil, they are typically started from transplants in the spring. Days to harvest are from transplants. In the warmer areas of Colorado, these crops produce the best quality when direct seeded midsummer (early July for the Front Range area) for harvest during cooler fall weather. Before planting out, harden off seedlings.
5. **Transplanting Vine Crops** – Vine crop (cucumbers, squash, melons) roots are extremely intolerant of being disturbed, and perform best when grown by direct seeding rather than by transplants. With the use of black plastic to warm the soil, direct seeded crops germinate rapidly. If using transplants, select small, young plants, not more than two to three weeks from seeding.
6. **Tomato family transplants** – The tomato family is traditionally planted from transplants. In warmer areas of Colorado, they can also be direct seeded with minimal delay. Days to harvest are from transplants.

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¹D. Whiting, Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension consumer horticulture specialist and Colorado Master Gardener coordinator; C. Wilson, Extension horticulture agent, Denver County; and C. O'Meara, Extension horticulture assistant, Boulder County.

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