

Vegetable Gardening Basics

Vegetable Categories

1. Leafy Crops – Lettuce, Spinach, Swiss Chard
2. Root Crops – Carrots, Radish, Parsnips, Onions
3. Cole Crops or Cabbage Family – Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Brussels Sprouts
4. Legumes – Beans, Peas
5. Squash and Melons – Zucchini, Yellow Summer Squash, Acorn Squash, Watermelon, Cantelope
6. Tomato Family (Solanaceae) – Peppers, Tomato, Egg Plant, Potato
7. Corn

Cool Season Crops

Generally, crops in the first 3 categories fall into the cool season category. However, peas also fall into this category. These crops can be planted 2-3 weeks before the last expected frost in the spring.

Warm Season Crops

The vegetables in categories 4-7 are typically warm season crops. These can be planted 1-3 weeks after the last expected frost date.

Planting Strategies

1. Succession Planting – Involves first planting and harvesting a quick maturing crop such as lettuce, radish or spinach. Once harvested, a second slower maturing crop is planted such as beans, cabbage or tomato in the same space.
2. Intercropping is accomplished by planting quick maturing crops that require narrow spacing, such as lettuce or spinach, between rows of longer-maturing crops, that need wider spacing, such as tomatoes, peppers or cabbage.
3. Stakes or Trellises - Supports are recommended for tomatoes, pole beans or vine crops. This allows vertical plant growth which not only takes up less garden space, but provides good air circulation for the crops thus reducing disease problems. It also allows for easier harvesting.
4. Raised Beds – Besides being easier on the gardener's back, raised beds can help improve yield, minimize compaction, enhance drainage and generally have fewer weeds. They can be constructed out of 2" x 6" boards set in 4' x 8' rectangles and filled with good composted garden soil or

packaged soil, eliminating the need for extensive shoveling or tilling.

5. Container Gardening – Patio tomatoes, bush cucumbers, lettuce, onions and herbs are all crops that can be grown quite well in containers. The containers should be fairly deep and have several drainage holes. Good growing media, frequent watering and routine fertilization will ensure healthy container plants.