

SUCCESSION PLANTING

Most gardeners in this area believe in the time-honored tradition of getting your garden in by Memorial Day weekend and then sitting back and waiting for those tomatoes and peppers to ripen. However, by continuing to plant and staggering plantings you spread out your harvest and often dodge pest problems as well.

It is true that summer annuals requiring 100 or more days to maturity have a limited planting window that ends, for the most part, by mid- to late June. This would include all tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant (all from transplants), melons, and most corn, bean, squash and pumpkin varieties. Almost all other vegetables, however, have extended planting seasons that, in some crops, can last all summer long. For successful production, the most important factors to remember are: 1) your first average fall frost date, 2) days to maturity (from direct seeding or transplanting) of the specific variety you are sowing, and 3) whether the plant is frost-tender or frost-tolerant. In addition, as the summer progresses toward mid- or late August, the day length begins to shorten noticeably, and the number of useful daylight hours for ripening a plant also lessens. For example, lettuce planted in mid-May may require 55 days to form a full head, but that same lettuce variety planted in mid-August may require 70 days to form a full head.

For cool weather crops to successfully survive in the summer heat, it is important to **Create Shade** and **Keep Moist**. Perhaps this means growing lettuce and endive under your bean trellises. One gardener has found that placing a pad of row cover several layers thick directly on the ground after seeding and watering helps keep the seed bed's moisture in and aids in germination. If the weather is hot and the ground is very warm, keeping that row cover wet will help cool the soil through evaporation. This is important for some seeds that won't germinate in hot soil. Peek under every few days and when you see shoots, gradually remove layers of row cover to give them more light while still providing a moist environment to promote a strong root system.

The listing that follows is an approximate guide for planting opportunities after the summer solstice (June 21) for common garden vegetables if the average first frost date is mid-October. Dane County's average first frost is October 4-10.

Last Planting: Early to Mid-July

Bush Beans - many varieties are ready in 50-60 days and can be planted until mid-July; late plantings avoid the ravages of the Mexican Bean Beetle

Broccoli - direct seed into a well-prepared nursery bed, and then transplant throughout the garden when seedlings are 4-6 weeks old

Cabbage - same as broccoli; however, varieties over 90 days to maturity may not reach full maturity if planted in July

Chinese Cabbage - same as broccoli

Cauliflower - same as broccoli

Corn - plant only varieties that mature in 60-70 days

Cucumber - the longest maturing varieties require 75 days

Chicory - leaves can be harvested in 60-70 days, or roots can be harvested in 100 or more days

Okra - loves the heat, and matures quickly

Leeks - from transplants

Radicchio - same as chicory

Rutabaga - a cold-hardy root that requires a fairly long, cool season for best results

Summer Squash - great for quickly filling in empty spots in a mid-summer garden

Last Planting: Late July–Early August

Carrot - varieties requiring 80–100 days to reach full maturity

Chard - can be planted even later but yields will decline

Collard - same as broccoli above

Kale - same as broccoli

Pea - a narrow planting window of opportunity for producing a fall crop

Last Planting: Mid–Late August

Beet - if grown with protection such as a cloche or hoop house, can be planted well into the fall season

Beetberry - vigorous cool-season re-seeder produces tasty spinach-like leaves and mildly sweet berries

Broccoli Raab - same as broccoli above

Endive - wait until the end of August as soil temperatures begin cooling, and keep soil moist for best germination results

Lettuce - plant every three weeks throughout the summer for continual harvests; can be planted in September but yields decline significantly

Mustard - sow in nursery bed and then transplant throughout the garden

Orach (Mountain Spinach) - germinates in warm soils but thrives in cool weather

Purslane - can be planted all summer when soil temperatures are warm

Spinach - planting at this time produces tasty greens in October

Turnip - fall roots are extra sweet

Last Planting: Early–Mid September

Arugula - versatile, quick green that will re-seed and emerge early the following spring

Cress - rapid-growing green that can be planted throughout the winter if grown under cloches or a hoop house

Huazontle - tasty, vigorous green related to lambsquarter (Chenopod family) that also produces nutritious seeds if planted earlier

Komatsuna - quick-maturing Asian green that can be planted in nursery bed and transplanted like other brassicas (broccoli, kale, etc.)

Radish - quick-growing roots have milder flavor in cool soils

Spinach - planting at this time produces small plants in the fall that go dormant during the winter and resume growing in early spring; harvest begins in late March, with continual production throughout the spring

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