

Planting Your Vegetable Garden

Bob Ary, Extension Agent

Are you making plans for your vegetable garden? Even though March has arrived and the days are getting longer, winter temperatures keep us from the thought of planting even the hardiest cool season vegetables. This is a good time to plan the garden and prepare our site so that we will be ready when the daytime and soil temperatures are suitable for the crops we wish to grow.

Always consider the frost free date. For those of us living in this part of the state, our average frost free date is May 1. Very cold hardy vegetables may be planted 4-6 weeks ahead of the frost free date. Cabbage, onions, English peas, radishes, lettuce, and spinach are included in this group.

Moderately cold hardy vegetables may be planted about two weeks before the frost free date. Crops included in this group are beets, broccoli, cauliflower, potatoes, and Swiss chard.

What about tomatoes, green beans and squash? These crops do best after the soil has warmed, which means that most years we would delay planting until at least May 1. Eggplant, okra, peppers, and other crops also fall into this group.

Planting crops sooner than recommended may result in poor seed germination, stunted plants, or the possibility that plants will be killed by subfreezing temperatures or a killing frost. Although we may be anxious and ready to grow something, we are better off to practice patience for a better harvest.