

Year-Round Planner for Growing Vegetables



The planner below is intended to guide a sequence of gardening related activities that will support the success of vegetable growing and keep growers engaged all year. We suggest using 'average frost date' as a rough time line for scheduling activities. Now we know that frost dates from year to year can vary. The average last frost date in Northern New Mexico is said to be around Mother's Day. In other locations this will, of course, vary. Also, one year's last frost day can be the following year's 80 degree weather. So be mindful of weather trends before transplanting outdoors. Another suggestion is to learn about the particular plants and crops that are planned, the kind of care they need, what they are susceptible to and when to generally harvest. This in itself can be an all-year intermittent activity.

Last Average Frost Date	Activities	Notes
20 Weeks Before	Soil test for vital minerals	Kits can be purchased at local nurseries or ag schools such as Colorado State University for an nominal fee, where a full treatment report is issued
	Treat garden soil	Generally, a mix of organic compost, peat moss and natural local soil will suffice and give the nutrients sufficient time for micro organisms to break down further. Main minerals include nitrogen, potassium and phosphate.
	Order seeds and inventory supplies for seed starting	There are numerous catalogues from which to select desired seeds, planting trays or flats, grow lights, etc. Be sure to select crops that allow growth in your climate zone. For example, artichokes are difficult to grow and transplant successfully in Northern New Mexico.
	Install a drip watering system, if water source is nearby	This will save endless hand watering hours
	Sow seeds indoors in flats	This is particularly applicable for herbs and crops that take a while to get going so they are ready when it's time to transplant outdoors. Some suggestions are parsley, basil, oregano, leeks, onions, peppers, broccoli and sprouts. Use light potting soil so the roots can easily expand in containers. Starting early helps to extend the growing season required.
	Turn covered compost piles and keep moist	
14 Weeks Before	Sow more seeds indoors for transplanting later	More suggestions for indoor starts are celery, collards, kale, chard, lettuce, cabbage, dill and cilantro. I also like to start assorted varieties of tomatoes, which is a lot of fun. They come in all sizes, shapes, colors and tastes for different uses. Experiment!
	Check on seedlings	Make sure there is plenty of light once seeds have propagated. If enough natural light is not available, use grow lights. Fluorescent lights can also be used if placed a maximum of 4" from the plants. Keep the soil spongy moist. The plants don't require a lot of water at this point. When seedlings start to grow about the height of the flat containers, I like to transplant to small pots to give roots room to grow. Again, use light potting soil.
	Store leftover seeds	A cool dry place is preferable.
9 Weeks Before	Direct sow seeds outdoors	Plant peas, spinach, lettuces, carrots, onions, parsnips, beets, scallions, radishes only if ground isn't frozen.
	Till under old crops if not done already	
	Treat soil if too compacted	Add compost and/or peat moss to loosen soil. If too compacted, the soil will not allow sufficient oxygen and water to reach roots sufficiently.
	Bear in mind complementary planting principles when garden planning.	Crops are grouped into four families: crucifers (cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, turnips, radishes, kohlrabi, mustard), cucurbits (melon, cucumber, squash), solanaceous (tomatoes, pepper, potato, eggplant), legumes (beans, peas). Try to group together when possible and rotate in the garden together the following year.
	Start transplanting indoor starts to larger containers	Begin hardening off the indoor starts by gradually introducing them to the outdoors starting an hour at a time and working up to longer increments.
6 Weeks Before	Continue sowing seeds outdoors as weather gets warmer	
	Start weeding	Warmer weather, winds and spring rains bring on more weeds. A weed is a plant that is invasive in a garden. They will reseed, multiply and rob wanted plants of nutrients if not tended to and eliminated.
	Separate crowns	Crowned plants such as rhubarb can get overcrowded.
	Start transplanting some indoor plants outdoors	If started indoors, begin transplanting root vegetables such as onions and leeks outdoors
3 Weeks to 1 Week Before	Sow bush beans, and all other vegetable seeds if haven't done so already.	Continue throughout the season at intervals as needed.

	Make second sowing of crops for transplanting later in the season	This includes cabbage, broccoli, cilantro, dill
	Sow seeds for leafy greens outdoors	
		Cut worms can be a problem, particularly with pepper seedlings outdoors. They will literally cut the main stem at ground level and break your heart. Cut paper towel rolls in 3" - 4" sections and place around the stem until plants are big enough to resist these pests. Look at for leaf miners on spinach, beets and chard and flea beetles on radishes, broccoli, cauliflower and raddishes. If leaf miners are discovered they will leave botchy trails on the leaves. Cover those crops with cheese cloth or a row cover to prevent this, around mid-spring when they come out. Follow directions and apply a neem or botanical insecticide to control flea beetles
	Look out for garden pests	
	Hardening off plants	Begin hardening off tomato plants if haven't done so. If planting in a covered garden, such as a greenhouse, plant inside the unit.
	Thin seedlings	Most packets of seeds recommend plant and row spacings, accounting for some dying off or seed failure. Seedlings should be thinned per instructions in order to allow them to grow and benefit from the nutrients in the soil.
	If planting potatoes, move the soil up against the plants to protect	
Last Frost to 2 Weeks After	Continue to check for insects and pests	
	Check for green worm larvae	They will appear around broccoli, kale, cabbage, brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, and cauliflower
	Continue weeding	
	Set out plants for transplanting	This applies to cucumbers, squash, melon, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and basil which need time and heat to develop. Be mindful of light and temperature requirements when placing in the garden. Peas like cooler and shadier areas; tomatoes like plenty of sun as the soil temperature needs to be higher.
	Consider growing edible flowers among the vegetables	Among these are nasturtiums, calendulas, cornflowers, daylillies and violets.
	Check for aphids, flea beetles and slugs	
	Make second sowings of lettuce, carrots, beets, corn and radishes.	Corn requires lots of lots of space and height
	Stake pepper and eggplant	
	Protect plants from wind	Wind will dry out plants at a quick rate. Protect using row cover, planks, milk bottles or any means available.
	Set out remaining transplants, if haven't already.	Remember to plant next to complementary or companion plants in the same family.
	Great time to sow summer squash	It will grow in a hurry.
	Water properly	Whether using soaker hoses, drip systems or a water wand, water the ground around the plant not the leaves themselves.
	Begin staking tomato plants that are starting to droop	More and more, I prefer using stakes over cages. They take up less room, are equally effective and more plants fit in less space. Pinch off suckers that develop to encourage more rapid growth.
If growing in a hoop house consider additional space by hanging baskets off the structure for tomatoes, vines and flowers		
3 - 5 Weeks After	Late season harvest preparation	Sow in flats, pots or garden: brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, boccoli, escarole, endive
	Replace early harvest crops	Sow summer squash, beans, carrots, fall cabbage, turnips, leaf lettuce
	Replenish soil around harvested plants with compost	Home-made, mushroom, steer or alpaca is great if you can get it.
	Keep monitoring for garden pests.	
	Depending on climate, begin harvesting.	This may apply to baby carrots, parsley, basil, lettuce (before it bolts), snow peas and asparagus (spears only).
	Watch out for and try to identify the good guys, the predatory insects that eat the pests.	Among these are parasitic wasps, ground beetles, lacewings, lady bugs, dragon flies. Lizzards are also great insect eaters.
6 - 8 Weeks After	Make additional sowings of cilantro, beans, carrots, beets, turnips, chard and lettuce	
	Transplant brussels sprouts seedlings into the garden	
	Check for hornworms around tomato plants	They are best seen very early in the day.
	Cut off old leaves of plants	
	Take shoot cutting of basil to start new plants	You will need to root first.
	Continue to remove suckers from tomato plants	They can be found where the branches vee.

	Continue harvesting	Crops that may be ready for harvest are zucchini, summer squash, shallots, peas, tarragon, basil, oregano, mint, broccoli, pickling cucumbers, tomatoes, potatoes, cabbage, green beans and radishes. Herbs are preferably harvested early in the day.
9 - 11 Weeks After	Sow more for late harvest planting	Spinach, kale, chard are good choices
	As plants are harvested, throw into compost pile.	Composting is a whole other topic. Simply put, it can be a roughly constructed bin out of pallets that are lined with black poly film and covered. My own method is to layer with straw, scraps from greens, eggshells, coffee grinds and harvested plants and covered with a few inches of natural soil. Soils may be mulch from trees, sand and loam. Repeat the layering until bin is full. Keep moist and turn. Have an opening at the bottom and empty finer grains of material. You'll find that worms come out of nowhere and multiply. They make nice fine castings out of the matter you put into the bin(s).
	Harvest herb leaves for drying	
	Harvest garlic, okra, carrots, corn, summer squash, green beans, cucumbers as ready	
Monitor tomatoes	If the weather is turning cool, remove new blossoms so the plants can focus on ripening existing fruit from green to orange.	
12 - 14 Weeks After (Early Fall)	Sow carrots in garden	They will overwinter.
	Sow herbs indoors in containers	Place by south or west-facing windows.
	Freeze or can extra produce	
	Harvest ripe vegetable as needed.	Winter rye and oats make good winter cover crops in their place. Turn over in spring for good composted material.
	Leave overripe beans on plants	They can be harvested as dry beans and cooked.
	Watch for garden pests	They are seeking to eat the fruits of your labor. Shop for low impact, non-toxic, organic soaps and herbicides to keep them in check.
	Can, freeze or pickle tomato harvests	
	Harvest basil	There should be several harvests of basil each season. They are ready for harvest once flower tops are formed. Some recipes call for fresh basil, either whole leaves or chopped. Most will be made into pesto. You should be getting the idea by now that gardening is closely tied to cooking and baking. This is an opportunity to expand culinary abilities and inspire experimentation.
15 - 17 Weeks After	Sow radish seeds for late crop.	
	Pull up plants no longer bearing	Incorporate in compost pile
	Replenish soil around harvested plants with compost	This will help set the garden up for good nourishing soil next spring.
	Store onions, shallots and garlic	Keep skins on for preservation.
	Save and store seeds of non-hybrid plants in cool dry locations .	
	Pul weeds before they go to seed.	
Plant garlic cloves	Garlic is planted 1" deep, 6" apart, pointy side up. It takes roughly 9 months after planting before ready for harvest. As each bulb is divided into separate cloves, the bounty of garlic can grow exponentially just by saving a few cloves the following year's harvest.	
18 - 21 Weeks After	Continue garden maintenance	Pull up dead plants
	Plant seeds for carrots beets, chard, kale Harvest remaining plants as needed.	Root vegetables, in particular, have a good chance of making it through the winter using frost cover, cold frames or a covered structure with some heating added.
22 - 29 Weeks After	Sow seeds indoors in flats or small containers	This is in preparation for next spring's planting. You might think about plants that take a while to develop before withstanding inconsistent spring weather, such as peppers and broccoli.
	Clean tools thoroughly to prevent spread of disease	Use soap and water.
	Cover beds with mulch such as dead leaves or straw.	These are better than wood chips which take a lot longer to break down. If leftover plants such as chard or kale are still in the garden, bunch mulch around the plants.

Along with personal experience vegetable gardening, *Week-by-Week Vegetable Gardener's Handbook* by Ron Kujawski & Jennifer Kujawski was leaned on heavily in developing this document. They go into much insightful detail about different aspects of gardening, as well. Other than that, there are other excellent guides on the market today. Failure is a key part of the learning process in gardening as in most areas of study. Try different techniques. Experiment! Vegetable gardening has many rewards. Aside from the obvious physical aspects, it is calming and invites introspection about life cycles and sciences. Have fun!