



ASK A MASTER GARDENER

WHEN TO PLANT YOUR VEGETABLES

By Johanne Ryker, Placer County Master Gardener

Q Is it too late to plant a vegetable garden?

A California has a unique vegetable growing climate, and we can grow many different types of vegetable crops throughout the year. Crops are classified as warm season or cool season crops. It is important that you plant at the right time of year for each crop for optimum yield.

Cool season crops are those that grow best and produce the best quality when the average temperatures are optimally 55-75°F and are usually tolerant of slight frosts. Plants in this group include root crops such as: beets, carrots, parsnip, radish, and turnips; stems such as asparagus and white potato; leafy crops such as cabbage, celery, lettuce, onion, and spinach; and plants whose immature flower parts we eat, such as broccoli, cauliflower, and globe artichokes.

Warm season crops are crops that grow best when the days are long and hot, optimally 65-95°F. These include crops with mature fruit such as tomatoes, cantaloupe, winter squash, and watermelon or immature fruit such as corn, squash, and snap beans.

If they are planted too early or too late, the productivity will be reduced, so it is very important to be aware of the correct planting dates in your area. These dates correlate to the approximate first and last frost dates in your area. For a detailed vegetable planting guide that lists the approximate planting periods for both cool and warm season crops: <http://ucanr.org/sites/gardenweb/files/29040.pdf>.

You can also expand your growing season by starting warm season plants indoors 6-8 weeks prior to the date you want to plant the garden and by using season extenders such as cold frames, row covers, and mini greenhouses.

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