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Vegetable Garden Calendar

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You can plant or harvest something from your garden almost all year. The two major planting periods, however, are spring (March to May) and fall (mid-July to September). The spring plantings are harvested in June and July, while the fall plantings are harvested from October to December. January and February are prime times for looking at seed catalogs, dreaming of warm spring days, preparing garden plots, and getting ready for a productive season.

Important Note: The monthly recommendations – especially the spring and fall planting dates – are for the typical month in middle Georgia. To use this calendar, consider middle Georgia as a belt across the state from Columbus through Macon to Augusta. Spring planting dates can be as much as two to three weeks earlier in extreme south Georgia, and fall planting dates can also be as much as two weeks later. In north Georgia, the spring planting dates are from one to three weeks later as you progress northward through the mountain counties; fall planting dates are about two weeks earlier.

The following recommendations are based on long-term average dates of the last killing frost in the spring and first killing frost in the fall. Every year does not conform to the “average,” so you should use your own judgment about advancing or delaying the time for each job, depending on weather conditions.

This calendar is prepared mainly as a reminder and guide for planning your garden work. Other extension publications containing information about specific gardening practices are mentioned throughout this leaflet and are available at your county extension office or on the Web at:

www.uga.edu/publications/

January

- Make a garden plan. Plan the garden to include various vitamin groups.
- Consider planting a few new varieties along with the old favorites. (See *Vegetable Gardening in Georgia*, Circular 963.)

- Plant the amount of each vegetable to be planted, including enough to can and freeze. Allow about 1/10 acre of garden space for each member of the family. (Ask your county Extension agent about *So Easy to Preserve*.)
- Buy enough quality seed for two or three plantings to lengthen the season of production.
- Take soil samples if you have not already done so, and take them to your county extension office for analysis.
- Apply manure or compost and plow it under if you did not do so in the fall.
- Apply lime, sulfur and fertilizer according to the soil-test results and vegetable requirements. Buy 100 pounds of fertilizer for each 1/10 acre to be planted (if manure is not available, buy at least half again more). Use 5-10-10 or 6-12-12 analysis, depending on soil test and vegetable requirements.
- Get plant beds or seed boxes ready for growing plants such as tomato, pepper and eggplant. Have beds ready for planting in early February.
- Check on your compost pile and make sure it is ready for use in the spring.
- Go by your county extension office and get copies of Georgia Extension gardening publications.

February

- Plant seed boxes. Peppers and eggplants will take eight weeks to grow from seed to transplant size, while tomatoes will take six weeks. When the seedlings form their third set of true leaves, transplant them to individual containers.
- Prepare land for planting – winter and early spring plantings belong on a ridge (raised bed) for better drainage and earlier soil warm-up.

- = If nematodes were a problem last year, make plans to plant another crop less susceptible to nematodes in the infected area.
- = Make early plantings of your choice from the following: carrots, collards, lettuce, mustard, English peas, Irish potatoes, radishes, spinach and turnips.
- = Use “starter” fertilizer solution around transplanted crops such as cabbage.
- = Replenish the mulch on strawberries.
- = Seed herbs for April planting. Make a list of the ones that are best to buy rather than seed, such as French tarragon and rosemary. (See your county agent about *Herbs in Southern Gardens*, Bulletin 1170.)

March

- = Make second plantings of such quickly-maturing crops as turnips, mustard, radishes and “spring onions.”
- = Thin plants when they are 2 to 3 inches tall to give the plants room to grow.
- = Carry out any February jobs not completed.
- = Treat seed before planting or buy treated seed for protection against seed-borne diseases, seed decay, seedling “damping off” and soil insects such as seed-corn maggots. (See *Home Gardening*, Extension Bulletin 577, and *Disease Management in the Home Vegetable Garden*, Extension Circular 862.)
- = Early-planted crops may need a nitrogen side-dressing, particularly if the soil is cool. Place the fertilizer several inches to the side of the plants and water it in. A little fertilizer throughout the growing period is better than too much at one time.
- = Before settling them in the garden, harden-off transplants – place them in their containers outdoors in a sheltered place a few days ahead of planting them.
- = Get rows ready for “warm-season” vegetables to be planted during the last week of March or first week or two of April as weather permits.
- = You might want to risk planting out a few of the more tender crops and keeping them covered during bad weather.
- = Watch out for insects, especially cutworms, plant lice (aphids) and red spider mites.
- = Put down mulch between rows to control weeds.

April

- = Plant your choices of the following “warm-season” or “frost-tender” crops: beans (snap, pole and lima), cantaloupe, corn (sweet), cucumbers, eggplant, okra, field peas, peppers, squash, tomatoes and watermelon.
- = Plant tall-growing crops such as okra, pole beans and corn on the north side of other vegetables to avoid shading. Plant two or more rows of corn for better pollination.
- = Make a second planting within two to three weeks of the first planting of snap beans, corn and squash.
- = Within three to four weeks of the first planting, plant more lima beans and corn. Remember: for better pollination, plant at least two or more rows.
- = Be sure to plant enough vegetables for canning and freezing.
- = Cultivate to control weeds and grass, to break crusty soil and to provide aeration.
- = Maintain mulch between rows.
- = For the crops planted earlier, side-dress as described above.
- = Plant tender herbs.
- = Remember: Do not work in your garden when the foliage is wet to avoid spreading diseases from one plant to another.

May

- = Make third plantings of vegetables mentioned for April (snap beans, corn, squash, lima beans).
- = Control grass and weeds; they compete for moisture and fertilizer.
- = Locate mulching materials for such crops as tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, Irish potatoes, okra and lima beans. Apply before dry spells occur but after plants are well established (usually by blooming time).
- = Pole beans cling to the trellis or sticks more readily if attached by the time they start running.
- = Try a few tomato plants on stakes or trellises this year. Now is the time to start removing suckers and tying the plants up.
- = Watch out for the “10 most wanted culprits”: Mexican bean beetle, Colorado potato beetle, bean leaf beetle, Harlequin cabbage bug, blister beetle,

cabbage worm, tomato hornworm, tomato fruit worm (and corn earworm), cucumber beetle and squash bug. Early discovery makes possible early control. Follow the schedule given in the *Georgia Pesticide Management Handbook*, for control of corn earworm and pickleworm.

- = Begin disease control measures as needed. Check with your county extension office for more information.
- = Water as needed.
- = Mulch as needed.
- = Keep a log book of problems and failures that occur so you can avoid or prevent them in the next planting season. Note successful techniques and varieties for consideration next season.
- = Make plans now for putting up some of your garden produce. Check with your county extension office for more information.

June

- = Harvest vegetables such as beans, peas, squash, cucumbers and okra regularly to prolong production and enjoy peak freshness.
- = Eat “high on the hog” this month and in July and preserve enough to last during the winter months ahead.
- = For best results, harvest onions and Irish potatoes when two-thirds of the tops have died down. Store potatoes in a cool, dark place and onions in a dry, airy place.
- = Clean off rows of early crops as soon as they are through bearing and use rows for replanting or keep them fallow for fall crops.
- = Water as needed.
- = Plant sweet potatoes and a second planting of Southern peas.

July

- = Start planning the fall garden.
- = Keep grass from going to seed. Fallow soil to conserve moisture for germination of fall crops and to help reduce the nematode population in the soil.
- = Clean off harvested rows immediately to prevent insect and disease buildup.
- = Plant the following vegetables not later than July 20 to allow time to mature before frost: tomatoes, okra,

corn, pole beans and lima beans. Also plant cucumbers, squash and snap beans.

- = Water deeply and less often – as needed to prevent drought stress.
- = Plant that big pumpkin for Halloween.
- = Be sure to make arrangements for neighbors to harvest and water your garden while you are on vacation.
- = Make sure the garden is well mulched to prevent weeds and conserve moisture.

August

- = Plant the following no later than the dates indicated below:
August 15 – Snap beans and Irish potatoes (seed can be sprouted two to three weeks before planting).
August 31 – Cucumbers and squash; plant varieties resistant to downy mildew.
- = In order to calculate the planting date, determine the frost date and count back the number of days to maturity plus 18 days for harvest of the crop. If snap beans mature in 55 days and your frost date is November 15, you should plant on or before September 3.
- = Start plants for broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale and onions in a half-shaded area for setting out in September.
- = Prepare soil for September to October plantings of “cool-season” crops. Apply fertilizer and prepare seeded so rains will settle the rows and make it easier to get seeds to germinate when they are planted.
- = If watering is necessary to get a stand, open the furrow for seed, pour in water, plant seed and cover. Use starter solution on the transplanted crops.
- = Water the garden as needed to prevent drought stress.

September - October

- = Choose the mild weather during this period to plant or transplant the following: beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, collards, lettuce, mustard, onions, radishes, spinach and turnips. Plant your second planting of fall crops such as collards, turnips, cabbage, mustard and kale.
- = Refurbish mulch to control weeds, and start adding leaves and other materials for the compost pile. Store your manure under cover to prevent leaching of nutrients.

- ‡ Water deeply and thoroughly to prevent drought stress. Pay special attention to new transplants.
- Harvest mature green peppers and tomatoes before frost gets them – it may not come until November, but be ready.
- Harvest herbs and dry them in a cool, dry place.

November - December

- Why not get started early for next year?
 1. Spread manure, rotted sawdust and leaves over the garden and plow them under; you'll be surprised at the difference this organic matter will make in the fertility, physical structure and water-holding capacity of the soil.
 2. Take a soil sample to allow plenty of time to get the report back. Lime applied now will be of more benefit next year than if it is applied in the spring before planting. Always apply Dolomitic limestone in order to get both calcium and magnesium.
- Save those leaves for the compost heap.
- Take an "inventory." Maybe you had too much of some vegetables and not enough of others – or maybe

there were some unnecessary "skips" in the supply. Perhaps some insect, disease or nematode problem got the upper hand. Make a note about favorite varieties. Start planning next year's garden now!

- You're wise to order flower and vegetable seeds in December or January, while the supply is plentiful. Review the results of last year's garden and order the more successful varieties.
- You may have seeds left over from last year. Check their viability by placing some in damp paper towels and observing the germination percentage. If the percentage is low, order new ones.
- Before sending your seed order, draw a map of the garden area and decide the direction and length of the rows, how much row spacing is needed for each vegetable, whether or not to plant on raised beds, and other details. That way, you won't order too many seeds. This same advice applied to the flower garden. Try new cultivars, add more color, change the color scheme, layer the colors by having taller and shorter plants – don't do it the same way year after year.
- Look around for tools you do not have and hint for these for Christmas presents.