

Early Spring Vegetables

Cold hardy vegetables and herbs can usually be planted outside towards the end of February. These vegetables often become sweeter when they mature in the cool of the spring and be ready to eat before the heat of summer.

All of these plants need cool weather, full sun (at least 6 hours), water, and rich organic well-drained soil to flourish. The soil pH should be between 6.0 and 7.0 for best growth and to discourage disease. (A soil test is a valuable way to test pH as well as any deficient nutrients.) In general, these plants need nitrogen to develop lush green growth, with peas being the exception.

GREENS - Lettuces, Spinach, Chard etc. Lettuce is one of the easiest and most productive cool season crops to grow. You can plant them in close quarters amongst other vegetables and herbs. Harvest leaf lettuce from the outside of the plant, leaving the central bud to grow more leaves, or cut the entire plant at the base.

BRASSICAS - Aka cole crops (*Brassica oleracea*) - Broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, and kohlrabi. To prevent diseases from building up in the soil, avoid cole crops in the same spot each year. Rotate with a non-cole crop for 2 years before returning to the same spot.

ALLIUMS - Onions, Leeks, Scallions. Onions roots are shallow and not very efficient at taking up moisture, so it is best to keep the soil consistently moist (not soggy) until the bulbs mature. You can harvest young onions just a few weeks after planting if you want to use them as "spring onions" or scallions. For full-sized bulbs, let onions grow and mature. They are ready to harvest when the bulbs are big and the tops begin to turn yellow and fall over.

PEAS - English (shelling), snow (flat, edible pod), snap (best of shelling and snow peas). As members of the legume family, peas fix their own nitrogen from the air, and can even improve your soil by adding nitrogen to it. You can add "inoculants," which is a powder of rhizobium bacteria to the soil to assist this nitrogen production. Install necessary supports when you plant.

Watch the weather forecast! You can protect young plants with frost cloth if a sudden or prolonged cold snap is expected. NOTE: Cold season crops can also be planted in the late fall (about 4-6 weeks before the first frost) for a spring crop. Check plant labels for those that overwinter better than others.