

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER



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## **Checking List Twice for Vegetables to Grow Season Long Annette Meyer Heisdorffer, Ph.D. Daviess County Extension Agent for Horticulture**

Santa Claus may be checking his gift list twice for naughty or nice boys and girls, but I am checking my list of vegetable seeds twice deciding which are suited for my garden throughout 2024. With planning, we can take advantage of the growing conditions and include vegetables to grow from late winter through late fall. By growing through the seasons, the amount of produce is increased.

Start the gardening season with cool-season crops. These crops can be planted and harvested from late winter to late spring. These plants grow best with relatively cool air temperatures (50 to 65 degrees F) and produce their vegetative growth during spring's short, cool days. If they are planted too late in the spring, summer heat reduces their quality by forcing some to flower and form seeds (bolt), and others to develop off flavors, bitterness, poor texture, and low yields. Lettuce will bolt and develop bitter flavors in the heat.

Spinach and peas can be directly seeded in the garden in mid- to late February. Plant beet, carrot, radish, kale, collard, and lettuce seeds into the garden in March along with onion sets. In addition, potato seed pieces and cabbage transplants can be planted around March 15. Then, around the end of March, place transplants of broccoli and cauliflower into the garden.

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

Cluster spring garden crops together to plant fall vegetables in the same area later. When doing this, do not plant closely related vegetables in the same rows in the fall because of possible disease and insect carryover from the spring crops.

As a word of caution in preparing the soil for spring crops, wait until the soil is workable and dry enough so it does not form wet clods. Do not work the soil when it is wet. Doing so can ruin the texture for several years. This may cause the desired planting dates to be delayed.

In addition, do not use organic mulches such as straw in early spring. Rather, let as much sunlight as possible reach the soil to warm it. After late April, use mulches to conserve soil moisture and help prevent weeds.

The summer garden should have a variety of crops, some harvested during the summer months and others continuing to bear into fall. Generally, summer crops are planted during the cool days of late spring through the warmer days when the danger of frost is past. The summer garden's crops should begin to produce when the harvest from the spring garden ends.

For example, summer garden vegetables consist of cool-season crops seeded or transplanted before the danger of frost is past but can endure hot weather at harvest times. This would include heat tolerant lettuce cultivars and quick maturing crops like radishes.

In addition, there are warm-season crops seeded or transplanted after the average frost-free date around April 20 for the summer garden. This later planting prevents slow germination due to cool soil temperatures and frost injury to emerging plants. Warm-season crops require warm soil and air temperatures for vegetative growth and fruiting. These would include green beans, pole beans, sweet corn, cucumber, okra, southern peas, watermelons, summer squash such as zucchini, and winter squash such as acorn squash. Tomatoes, peppers,

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

eggplant, cucumbers, and melons are transplanted after the danger of frost is past, which may be the last week of April to the first week of May.

Gardening doesn't have to end with your summer-grown crops since some vegetables are suitable for late summer planting. Plan to follow your spring and summer gardens with a fall garden. Plant crops according to the planting plan to be sure short ones are not shaded by tall ones. To encourage good germination in the late summer, fill each seed furrow with water and let it soak in. Keep the soil moist until seeds have germinated.

Fall vegetables are harvested after early September. They consist of two types: the last plantings of warm-season crops, such as bush beans and summer squash, and the beginning of cool-season crops again which grow well during the cool fall days and withstand frost.

Note that cool nights slow growth, so crops take longer to mature in the fall than in the summer. Keep this slower pace in mind when checking seed catalogs for the average days to maturity. Some of the best quality vegetables are produced during fall's warm days and cool nights. These environmental conditions add sugar to cole crops and crispness to carrots.

The following vegetables can be successfully seeded or transplanted for fall harvest: beets, bib lettuce, carrots, collards, bush green beans, leaf lettuce, mustard greens, parsnips, radishes, rutabaga, spinach, and turnips. Broccoli and cabbage transplants placed into the garden by August 15 will usually yield a sweet crop in the fall.

The 'Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky' publication (ID-128) provides the earliest and latest dates for either seeding or transplanting vegetables into the garden. For more information about vegetable gardening, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or [annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu](mailto:annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu).

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

## Question and Answer:

Regarding rotating vegetables, what crops are closely related so I choose other vegetables to use in my rotation? The following groups of vegetables listed are closely related and subjected to the same diseases and insect problems: beets, Swiss Chard, and spinach; cabbage, cauliflower, kale, collards, Brussels Sprouts, broccoli, turnips, and mustard; peas, broad beans, snap beans, and lima beans; potatoes, eggplant, tomatoes, and peppers; and pumpkins, squash, watermelons, cucumbers, and muskmelons.

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