



Grow Your Own Vegetables ~ It's Worth it!

Vegetables can be grown in containers on patios and rooftops, home yards, community garden lots, or large ranch areas — providing nutritious, fresh, delicious food. Benefits include:

- Growing varieties that you and your family like
- Growing enough to feed your neighborhood
- Exercise
- Knowing how and where your food is grown
- Reducing your carbon footprint by
 - eliminating the environmental costs of growing and shipping produce to your market
 - less vehicle travel to purchase produce
 - reducing or eliminating pesticide use

The Basics

Growing enough produce to feed your family or your neighborhood is possible, just follow these basics:

- Choose the best available site for your garden, preferably in a location that is easily accessible from your home. Select a site that receives 6 to 8 hours of full sun each day. It should be relatively level, well-drained, and near a water source. Avoid shaded locations.
- Plan your garden on paper before you begin so that you have vegetables all year round. See planting table, below.
- Before you plant, amend the soil with compost. Mulch and fertilize as needed.
- Plant only as large a garden as you can easily maintain. The size of your garden should be based on how much time you'll be able to give to it. Plan about 3-5 hours a week for a large garden.
- Plant vegetables that your family likes.
- Grow crops that produce the maximum amount of food in the space available. For example, growing corn or melons is probably not your best choice if you have a small space.
- Plant during the correct season for the crop you plan to grow (see Vegetable Classification, below).
- Plant disease-resistant varieties that are adapted to and recommended for your area. Ask your local UCCE master gardener.
- Fertilize according to directions. Too much is as bad as too little.
- Harvest vegetables several times a week and at the maturity you like best. Store them promptly and properly if they are not to be used immediately.

Culture

- Irrigate soil thoroughly before planting.
- Plant rows running north to south with tall plants bordering the garden on the north

- Consider planning on a grid for small spaces, small plants.
- Directly sow seeds into the soil, use transplants that you have started indoors, or buy the seedlings from a nursery.
- Transplant after the danger of frost is past, when the plant has only 2 or 3 true leaves. If there is a danger of frost, provide plant covers.
- Plant seeds at a depth of twice the diameter of the seed. Thin emerged plants according to directions on the seed packet.
- Do not crowd transplants. Space them according to directions.
- Drip irrigation encourages root growth, reduces weed invasion, and is the most efficient. Check the moisture in the root zone, not at the soil surface.
- Instead of trying to kill all insects, learn which ones are beneficial — plant a variety of plants to encourage beneficial insects.
- Use least toxic chemicals — water, insecticidal soap, *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), or horticultural oils.
- Mulch to conserve water and prevent weed germination.
- Some vegetables benefit from frequent harvesting, e.g., okra, peppers, beans, peas.

Vegetable Classification

Most vegetables are classified as cool-season or warm-season crops.

Cool-Season Vegetables grow best and produce the best-quality crops when average temperatures are 55° to 75°F (13° to 24°C), and they usually tolerate slight frost when mature. The food value of cool-season vegetables is usually higher per pound and per square foot than that of warm-season vegetables, because the edible parts of the plant are the vegetative parts—such as roots, stems, leaves, or immature flower parts. Examples include:

- **root:** beet, carrot, parsnip, radish, turnip
- **stem:** asparagus, white potato
- **leaf:** cabbage, celery (fleshy petioles), lettuce, onion, spinach
- **immature flower parts:** broccoli, cauliflower, globe artichoke

Warm-Season Vegetables require long, hot days and warm soil to mature. They grow best and produce the best-quality crops when average temperatures are 65° to 95°F (18° to 35°C), and they are intolerant of prolonged freezing temperatures. Examples include:

- **mature fruit:** cantaloupe, winter squash, tomato, watermelon

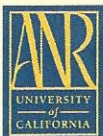
- **immature fruit:** sweet corn, snap and lima beans, summer squash

Vegetable	Recommended Planting Dates				General Planting Requirements	
	North and North Coast ^a	South Coast ^a	Interior Valleys ^a	Desert Valleys ^a	Crop Type ^b	Amount to Plant (4 people)
Beans, snap ^{1,2}	Jul; May-Jun	Mar-Aug	Apr-May; Jul-Aug	Jan-Mar; Aug	W	15-25 ft. row
Beets ^{1,2}	Feb-Aug	Jan-Sep	Feb-Apr; Aug	Sep-Jan	C	10-15 ft. row
Broccoli ^{1,2,3}	Feb-Apr; Aug-Sep	Jun-Jul; Jan-Feb	Dec-Feb; Jul	Sep	C	6-100 ft. row
Cantaloupes/ Other melons	May	Apr-May	Apr-Jun	Jan-Apr; Jul	W	5-10 hills
Carrots ^{1,2}	Jan-May; Jul-Aug	Jan-Sep	Aug-Sep; Feb-Apr	Sep-Dec	C	10-25 ft row
Chard ¹	Feb-May; Aug	Feb-May	Feb; Aug	Sep-Oct	C	3-4 plants
Chives ¹	Apr	Feb-Apr	Feb-Mar	Sep-Feb	C	1 clump
Corn, sweet ²	May-Jul	Mar-Jul	Mar-Jul	Feb-Mar	W	20-30 ft
Cucumbers	Apr-Jun	Apr-Jun	Apr-Jul	Feb-May	W	6 plants
Eggplant ^{1,3}	May	Apr-May	Apr-May	Feb-Apr	W	4-6 plants
Garlic ¹	Oct-Dec	Oct-Dec	Oct-Dec	Sep-Nov	C	10-20 ft row
Lettuce ^{1,2}	Feb-Aug	Aug-Apr	Aug; Nov-Mar	Sep-Dec	C	10-15 ft row or 5 ft row each month
Okra	May	Apr-May	May	Mar	W	10-20 ft row
Onions ^{1,4} (bulb)	Jan-Mar	Feb-Mar	Nov-Mar	Oct-Nov	C	30-40 ft. row
Onions ^{1,2,3} (green)	Apr-Jul	All year	Aug-Dec	Sep-Jan	C	---
Peas ^{1,2}	Jan-Apr; Sep-Oct	Aug; Dec-Mar	Sep-Jan	Sep-Oct; Jan-Feb	C	30-40 ft row
Peppers ^{1,3}	May	Apr-May	May	Mar	W	5-10 plants
Potatoes ³ , sweet	May	Apr-May	Apr-Jun	Feb-Jun	W	50-100 ft row
Potatoes, white	Early: Feb Late: Apr-May	Feb-May; Jun-Aug	Feb-Mar; Aug	Dec-Feb	C	50-100 ft row
Pumpkins	May	May-Jun	Apr-Jun	Mar-Jul	W	1-3 plants
Radish ^{1,2}	All year	All year	Sep-Apr	Oct-Mar	C	4 ft row
Spinach ¹	Aug-Feb	Aug-Mar	Sep-Jan	Sep-Nov	C	10-20 ft row
Squash, ¹ summer	May-Jul	Apr-Jun	Apr-Jul	Feb-Mar	W	2-4 plants
Squash, ¹ winter	May	Apr-Jun	Apr-Jun	Feb-Mar; Aug	W	2-4 plants
Tomatoes ^{1,3}	May	Apr-Jul 15	Apr-May	Dec-Mar	W	6-10 (if processing)
Turnips ¹	Jan; Aug	Jan; Aug-Oct	Feb, Aug	Oct-Feb	C	10-15 ft row
Watermelons	May-Jun	Apr-Jun	Apr-Jun	Jan-Mar	W	6 plants

^a North and North Coast = Monterey County north; South Coast = San Luis Obispo County south; Interior Valleys = Sacramento, San Joaquin, and similar valleys; Desert Valleys = Imperial, Coachella valleys. Planting dates are only approximate, as the climate may vary even in small regions of the state. Contact your local master gardeners and experiment on your own to find more precise dates.

^b C = cool season; W = warm season

- ¹ This crop is suitable for a small garden if compact varieties are grown.
- ² In a suitable climate, these crops can be planted more than once/year for a continuous harvest.
- ³ Transplants may be used for planting.
- ⁴ Onion varieties are daylight dependent. Short-day and intermediate-day varieties are autumn planted. Long-day varieties are planted in spring.



Please contact your local master gardener for more information <http://camastergardeners@ucdavis.edu>

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WARNING ON THE USE OF CHEMICALS

- Pesticides are poisonous. Always read and carefully follow all precautions and safety recommendations given on the container label. Store all chemicals in their original labeled containers in a locked cabinet or shed, away from foods or feeds, and out of the reach of children, unauthorized persons, pets, and livestock.
- Confine pesticides to the property being treated. Avoid drift onto neighboring properties or gardens containing fruits and/or vegetables ready to be picked.
- Dispose of empty containers carefully. Follow label instructions for disposal. Never reuse the containers. Make sure empty containers are not accessible to children or animals. Never dispose of containers where they may contaminate water supplies or natural waterways. Do not pour down sink or toilet. Consult your county agricultural commissioner for correct ways of disposing of excess pesticides. **Never burn pesticide containers.**
- PHYTOTOXICITY: Certain chemicals may cause plant injury if used at the wrong stage of plant development or when temperatures are too high. Injury may also result from excessive amounts or the wrong formulation or from mixing incompatible materials. Inert ingredients, such as wetters, spreaders, emulsifiers, diluents, and solvents, can cause plant injury. Since formulations are often changed by manufacturers, it is possible that plant injury may occur, even though no injury was noted in previous seasons.



Table 14.2

VEGETABLE GARDENING AT A GLANCE: HOW TO PLANT AND STORE

Vegetable	Recommended planting dates ^a				General planting requirements				Storage conditions		
	North and North Coast	South Coast	Interior Valleys	Desert Valleys	Crop type ^b	Amount to plant (4 persons)	Distance in inches ^c between plants in rows (cm)	Distance in inches ^c between rows (no beds) (m)	Best temp °F (°C)	Time length (weeks)	How to preserved ^d
artichoke ^e	Aug–Dec	May–Jul	Jul	Sep	C	3–4 plants	48 (122)	60 (1.5)	32 (0)	1–2	freeze whole, can, dry, or freeze hearts
asparagus ^e	Jan–Mar	Jan–Feb	Jan–Feb	Feb–Apr	C	30–40 plants	12 (31)	60 (1.5)	32 (0)	3–4	can, dry, or freeze
beans, lima ^f	May–Jun	May–Jun	May–Jun	—	W	15–25-ft row	6 (15) bush; (4.5–7.5-m row)	30 (0.8) 24 (61) pole	40 (4)	1–3	can, dry, or freeze
beans, snap ^{f,g}	Jul; May–Jun	Mar–Aug	Apr–May; Jul–Aug	Jan–Mar; Aug	W	15–25-ft row (4.5–7.5-m row)	3 (7.5) bush; 24 (61) pole	30 ^h (0.8)	45–55 (7–13)	1–2	can, dry, or freeze
beets ^{f,g}	Feb–Aug	Jan–Sep	Feb–Apr; Aug	Sep–Jan	C	10–15-ft row (3–4.5-m row)	2 (5)	18 ^h (0.5)	32 (0)	3–10	can, dry, or freeze
broccoli ^{e, f,g}	Feb–Apr; Aug–Sep	Jun–Jul; Jan–Feb	Dec–Feb; Jul	Sep	C	6–10-ft row (2–3-m row)	12–18 (30–45)	36 (0.9)	32 (0)	1–2	dry or freeze
brussels sprouts ^e	Feb–May	Jun–Jul	—	—	C	15–20-ft row (4.5–6-m row)	24 (61)	36 (0.9)	32 (0)	3–4	dry or freeze
cabbage ^{e,f}	Jan–Apr; Jul–Sep	Aug–Feb	Jul; Feb	Sep–Nov	C	10–15 plants	24 (61)	36 (0.9)	32 (0)	12–16	dry or freeze
cabbage, Chinese ^f	Jul–Sep	Aug–Oct	Aug	Aug–Nov	C	10–15-ft row (3–4.5-m row)	6 (15)	30 ^h (0.8)	32 (0)	2–3	dry or freeze
cantaloupes and other melons	May	Apr–May	Apr–Jun	Jan–Apr; Jul	W	5–10 hills	12 (30)	72 (1.8)	40–45 (4–7)	2–4	freeze
carrots ^{f,g}	Jan–May; Jul–Aug	Jan–Sep	Aug–Sep; Feb–Apr	Sep–Dec	C	10–25-ft row (3–7.5-m row)	2 (5)	24 ^h (0.6)	32 (0)	16–20	can, dry, or freeze
cauliflower ^e	Jun–Jul	Jul–Oct; Feb Jan–Feb	Jul–Aug	Aug–Sep	C	10–15 plants	24 (61)	36 (0.9)	32 (0)	2–3	pickle, dry, or freeze
celeriac	Mar–Jun	Mar–Aug	Jun–Aug	—	C	10–15-ft row	4 (10)	24 ^h (0.6)	32 (0)	8–16	can, dry, or freeze
celery ^{e,f}	Mar–Jun	Apr–Aug	Jun–Aug	—	C	20–30-ft row (6–9-m row)	5 (13)	24 ^h (0.6)	32 (0)	8–16	can, dry, or
freeze											
chard ^f	Feb–May; Aug	Feb–May	Feb; Aug	Sep–Oct	C	3–4 plants	12 (30)	30 (0.8)	32 (0)	1–2	freeze
chayote	—	Apr–May	May–Jun	—	W	1–2 plants	72 (183)	use trellis	—	—	use fresh
chives ^f	Apr	Feb–Apr	Feb–Mar	Sep–Feb	C	1 clump	—	—	—	—	use fresh
corn, sweet ^g	May–Jul	Mar–Jul	Mar–Jul; Aug	Feb–Mar	W	20–30-ft (6–9 m) in 4 rows	12 (30)	36 (0.9)	32 (0)	½–1	can, dry, or freeze
cucumbers	Apr–Jun	Apr–Jun	Apr–Jul	Feb–May; Aug	W	6 plants	24 (61)	48 (1.2)	45–55 (7–13)	1–2	freeze, pickle, or puree
eggplant ^{e,f}	May	Apr–May	Apr–May	Feb–Apr	W	4–6 plants	18 (46)	36 (0.9)	50–60 (10–16)	1–2	dry or freeze
endive ^f	Mar–Jul	Dec–Aug	Jan; Apr; Aug	Sep–Dec	C	10–15-ft row (3–4.5-m row)	10 (25)	24 ^h (0.6)	32 (0)	2–3	use fresh
Florence fennel	Mar–Jul	Feb–Jul	Aug	Sep–Nov	C	10–15-ft row (3–4.5-m row)	4 (10)	30 ^h (0.8)	32 (0)	2–3	can, dry, or freeze
garlic ^f	Oct–Dec	Oct–Dec	Oct–Dec	Sep–Nov	C	10–20-ft row (3–6-m row)	3 (7.5)	18 ^h (0.5)	65–70 (18–21)	24–32	use fresh
kale	Feb–April	Aug–Oct	Aug–Sept	Sept–Nov	C	10-ft row (3-m row)	18–24 (46–61)	24–30 (0.6–0.8)	32 (0)	2	use fresh
kohlrabi ^f	Jul–Aug	Jan; Aug–Sep	Aug	Oct–Nov	C	10–15-ft row (3–4.5-m row)	3 (7.5)	24 (0.6)	32 (0)	2–4	use fresh
leeks	Feb–Apr	Jan–Apr	Jan–Apr	—	C	10-ft row	2 (5)	24 (0.6)	32 (0)	4–12	use fresh
lettuce ^{f,g}	Feb–Aug	Aug–Apr	Aug; Nov–Mar	Sep–Dec	C	10–15-ft row or 5 ft (1.5m) each month	12 (30) head; (3–4.5-m row)	24 (0.6) 6 (0.15) leaf	32 (0)	2–3	use fresh

Table 14.2 cont.

Vegetable	Recommended planting dates ^a				General planting requirements				Storage conditions		
	North and North Coast	South Coast	Interior Valleys	Desert Valleys	Crop type ^b	Amount to plant (4 persons)	Distance in inches ^c between plants in rows (cm)	Distance in inches ^c between rows (no beds) (m)	Best temp °F (°C)	Time length (weeks)	How to preserve ^d
mustard	Apr; Jul–Aug	Aug–Feb	Aug; Apr	Oct–Dec	C	10-ft row (3-m row)	8 (20)	24 ^h (0.6)	32 (0)	1–2	use fresh
okra	May	Apr–May	May	Mar	W	10–20-ft row	18 (46)	36 (0.9)	50–60 (10–16)	—	use fresh
onions, bulb ^f	Jan–Mar	Feb–Mar	Nov–Mar	Oct–Nov	C	30–40-ft row	3 (7.5) (9–12-m row)	18 ^h (0.5)	32–36	12–32 (0–2)	can, dry, or freeze
onions, green ^{e,f,g}	Apr–Jul	All year	Aug–Dec	Sep–Jan	C				85–90 (30–32)		use fresh
parsley ^f	Dec–May	Dec–May	Dec–May	Sep–Oct	C	1–2 plants	8 (20)	24 (0.6)	32 (0)	1–2	dry or freeze
parsnips	May–Jun	Mar–Jul	May–Jul	Sep–Oct	C	10–15-ft row (3–4.5-m row)	3 (7.5)	24 ^h (0.6)	32 (0)	8–16	freeze
peas ^{f,g}	Jan–Apr; Sep–Oct	Aug; Dec–Mar	Sep–Jan; Jan–Feb	Sep–Oct	C	30–40-ft row (9–12-m row)	2 (5)	36 (0.9) bush; 48 (1.2) vine	32 (0)	1–2	can, dry, or freeze
peppers ^{e,f}	May	Apr–May	May	Mar	W	5–10 plants	24 (61)	36 (0.9)	45–55 (7–13)	4–6	can, dry, or freeze
potatoes, sweet ^e	May	Apr–May	Apr–Jun	Feb–Jun	W	50–100-ft row (15–30-m row)	12 (30)	36 (0.9)	55–60 (13–16)	8–24	can, dry, or freeze
potatoes, white	Early; Feb	Feb–May	Feb–Mar; Aug	Dec–Feb	C	50–100-ft row (15–30-m row)	12 (30)	30 (0.8)	40–45 (4–7)	12–20	can, dry, or freeze
pumpkins	Late: Apr–May	Jun–Aug	Aug								
radish ^{f,g}	May	May–Jun	Apr–Jun	Mar–Jul	W	1–3 plants	48 (122)	72 (1.8)	55 (13)	8–24	can, dry, or freeze
	All year	All year	Sep–Apr	Oct–Mar	C	4-ft row (1.2-m row)	1 (2.5)	6 ^h (0.2)	32 (0)	—	use fresh
rhubarb ^e	Dec–Mar	Dec–Jan	Dec–Feb	—	C	2–3 plants	36 (91)	48 (1.2)	32 (0)	2–3	can or freeze
rutabaga	Jul; Mar–Apr	Jul–Sep; Aug–Mar	Aug	Oct–Dec	C	10–15-ft row (3–4.5-m row)	3 (7.5)	6 ^h (0.2)	32 (0)	8–16	freeze
spinach ^f	Aug–Feb	Aug–Mar	Sep–Jan	Sep–Nov	C	10–20-ft row (3–6-m row)	3 (7.5)	18 ^h (0.5)	32 (0)	1–2	dry or freeze
squash, summer ^f	May–Jul	Apr–Jun	Apr–Jul Aug–Sep	Feb–Mar;	W	2–4 plants	24 (61)	48 (1.2) (10–13)	50–55	2–3	can, dry, or freeze
squash, winter ^f	May	Apr–Jun	Apr–Jun	Feb–Mar; Aug	W	2–4 plants	24–48 (61–122)	72 (1.8)	55 (13)	8–24	can, dry, or freeze
tomatoes ^{e,f}	May	Apr–Jul 15	Apr–May	Dec–Mar	W	6–10 plants	18–36 (46–91)	36–60 (0.9–1.5)	55–65 (13–18)	1–2	can, dry, or freeze
turnips ^f	Jan, Aug	Jan Aug–Oct	Feb; Aug	Oct–Feb	C	10–15-ft row (3–4.5-m row)	2 (2.5)	18 ^h (0.5)	32 (0)	8–12	can
watermelons	May–Jun	Apr–Jun	Apr–Jun	Jan–Mar	W	6 plants	60 (152)	72 (1.8)	40 (4)	2–3	freeze

Notes:

^a North and North Coast = Monterey County north; South Coast = San Luis Obispo County south; Interior Valleys = Sacramento, San Joaquin, and similar valleys; Desert Valleys = Imperial and Coachella Valleys. Because the areas shown here are large, planting dates are only approximate, as the climate may vary even in small sections of the state. Contact experienced gardeners in your community and experiment on your own to find more precise dates.

^b C = cool season, W = warm season.

^c Planting distances listed here are standards. Many crops can be spaced more closely for intensive production.

^d Adapted from *Vegetable Gardening Illustrated* 1994.

^e Transplants, shoots, or roots are used for field planting.

^f This crop is suitable for a small garden if compact varieties are grown.

^g In a suitable climate, these crops can be planted more than once per year for a continuous harvest.

^h If grown in beds, plant two rows per bed. Space the beds about 32 to 40 inches (80 to 100 cm) apart and make the tops of the beds 18 inches (45 cm) wide.

Subject: Approximate First and Last Frost Dates in California

Description: California has many climate zones and the number of frost days will vary within small areas. However, there are historical references available from the National Weather Service that can approximate when the first and last frost date might occur in your area. These dates help you to know when you might safely plant frost-tender vegetables in your garden or the length of your growing season. The following table provides approximate dates where there is a 10% chance and a 50% chance for frost (temperatures that are 32° F or lower) and the number of days at 32° F and 28° F and above for various communities in California.

Approximate Frost Dates in California						
	Probability of Frost (Spring) (month/day)		Probability of Frost (Fall) (month/day)		# of Frost Free Days* at 32° F or higher	# of Days* at 28° F or higher
Community	50%	10%	10%	50%		
Alameda	--	1/17	12/26	--	365	365
Auburn	2/18	4/02	11/09	12/01	232	312
Bakersfield	1/25	2/24	11/15	12/11	277	321
Berkeley	--	1/18	12/25	--	365	365
Bishop	5/04	5/25	9/29	10/15	137	157
Chico	3/21	4/24	10/29	11/14	196	258
Davis	2/26	4/08	10/31	11/28	226	282
Eureka	1/27	3/12	11/13	12/16	274	365
Fairfield	2/07	3/16	11/14	12/06	255	306
Fresno	2/04	3/20	11/06	12/03	246	300
Half Moon Bay	--	3/07	12/09	--	306	365
Lakeport	4/16	5/07	10/11	11/03	163	197
Lompoc	2/08	3/23	11/11	12/14	259	329
Long Beach	--	1/08	12/23	--	365	365
Los Angeles	--	--	--	--	365	365
Marysville	1/25	2/26	11/17	12/09	280	320
Modesto	2/01	3/03	11/16	12/08	268	313
Mendocino	2/19	4/12	11/05	12/07	229	332
Monterey	--	1/27	12/18	--	365	365
Napa	2/22	4/06	11/05	12/05	277	310
Palm Springs	1/04	3/07	11/29	2/01	309	359
Pasadena	--	2/08	12/12	--	365	365
Paso Robles	4/05	5/14	10/11	10/29	160	217
Placerville	4/10	5/10	10/20	11/09	171	214
Riverside	1/26	3/07	11/18	12/23	272	365
Sacramento	2/10	3/20	12/04	1/01	250	306
Salinas	7/22	3/01	11/17	12/10	217	365
San Bernardino	1/21	3/09	11/23	12/24	265	365
San Diego	--	--	--	--	365	365
San Jose	1/11	2/10	11/24	12/26	301	365
San Luis Obispo	1/24	3/29	11/10	12/30	247	352
San Rafael/Marin	1/24	4/15	11/19	1/02	242	365
Santa Rosa	2/21	4/05	11/05	12/07	228	291
Sonora	4/19	5/17	10/11	11/04	164	200
Stockton	2/13	3/14	11/14	11/30	254	293
Ukiah	3/18	4/17	10/29	11/16	203	266
Victorville	4/02	4/24	10/22	11/03	189	226
Visalia	1/28	3/02	11/12	12/06	267	315
Woodland	1/31	2/28	11/13	12/04	267	307
**Yuba city	--	4/08	11/08	--	--	--

* Indicates a 90% probability for number of days at 32° F and 28° F or higher.

Data compiled from: National Weather Service Data, Climatography of California-Freeze/Frost Occurrence Data, 1971-2000.

** Data from county Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

Publication and web links: http://cdo.ncdc.noaa.gov/climate_normals/clim20supp1/states/CA.pdf

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