

Spring Gardening Planting Guide

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When planting an early spring garden, it is important to have a plan for what will be grown in the garden bed throughout the year. By making a plan, and planting according to this plan, you can get two or three crops out of one garden each year. This concept of “succession gardening” is the best way to maximize the yields from limited space.

Your first consideration when planting an early spring garden should be crop rotation. It is never a good idea to grow the same crops in the same space for more than two years in a row. Planting the same crops in the same location year after year is an invitation to various plant diseases, encourages the presence of insects that could damage your crops, and will rob the soil of specific nutrients that different plants need. It is a good idea to keep a yearly journal of what crops you plant in each location so you can be sure to have a good rotation schedule.

The next thing you need to plan for is what crops you are going to grow in early spring, summer, and fall. Early spring crops such as lettuce, radishes, kohlrabi, cabbage, beets, and snow peas grow best in cool, damp conditions and do not grow well in hot weather. Other spring crops such as carrots, chard, kale, and onions can be started in early spring, but will continue to grow and thrive into early and mid-summer. Summer crops such as tomatoes, peppers, squash, okra, and beans cannot tolerate cool temperatures at all and will not grow or could die if exposed to cool temperatures or any frost. Some crops can again be planted in the late summer and early fall for a late fall and winter harvest. Lettuce, Brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, carrots, radishes, and cabbage can be planted in September and some will grow all the way into January and February if they are protected from harsh changes in weather. Spinach and garlic are best planted in October for harvest the following spring and summer.

With crop rotation and succession planting in mind, it is time to plan a planting schedule.

With the use of floating row covers, you can extend the growing season by a month or more on the beginning of spring and the end of fall. Depending on the weather patterns each year, a target date of the first of March is usually a good time to get early spring crops in the ground. Planting these varieties now allows you to have an extended harvest through the end of May and will make space in the garden to plant warm season crops in the gaps where you harvest the early vegetables. Warm season crops will be planted in early May through early June for harvest all summer long. Fall crops will be planted in September for harvest in October through December or January. The following table is a general guideline for planting, harvesting, and covering.

Crops	Plant Dates	Harvest Dates	Covering
<i>Lettuce, radish, peas, kohlrabi, kale, chard, carrots, cabbage, and beets</i>	Early March through late March	Late March through early June	Cover with floating row covers. Uncover when plants are very large and before planting summer crops.
<i>Tomato, pepper, squash, cucumber, okra, and beans</i>	Early May through early June	Late June through September and early October.	Do not cover
<i>Lettuce, radishes, cabbage, beets, kohlrabi, turnips, carrots, and chard</i>	Mid September	October through December and possibly January	Cover with floating row covers as soon as you pull the summer crops out of the bed.
<i>Garlic and Spinach</i>	October	Spinach in April and May. Garlic in June	Cover spinach. Do not cover Garlic.

Plant spacing is an important consideration to take when planning your garden. Planting early spring crops close together is a very good idea. Close spacing helps to eliminate weed growth, allows plants to support each other, and allows you to harvest plants at their young stages to make room for the others to grow into larger plants. I plant my lettuces, radishes, beets, kohlrabi, and carrots at 1 – 1 ½ inch intervals. As they grow, I harvest every other plant at a young stage for tender eating. Then I allow the remaining plants to grow into the spaces I made. I repeat this “every-other plant” harvest procedure every time to allow plants more room. The garden will seem very crowded at first, but it will maintain a balance as you harvest in the spring. By the beginning of May, you will now have room in your garden to plant your summer crops such as tomatoes, peppers, squash and beans. Plant them directly in the places where you removed your early spring crops.



2018 Early Spring Vegetable Seedlings

1	Black Seeded Simpson Lettuce
2	Ruby Sky Lettuce
3	Bambi Lettuce
4	Adriana Lettuce
5	Green Forest Romaine Lettuce
6	Red Wing Lettuce Mix
7	Amish Deer Tongue Lettuce
8	Rocky Top Lettuce Mix
9	Okayama Butterhead Lettuce
10	Speckled Bibb Butterhead Lettuce
11	Green Star Lettuce
12	European Mesclun Mix
13	Starbor Kale
14	Quickstar Kohlrabi
15	Winner Kohlrabi
16	Early Purple Vienna Kohlrabi
17	Green Magic Broccoli
18	Denali Cauliflower
19	Rhodos Endive
20	Charleston Cabbage
21	Swiss Chard Rhubarb
22	Swiss Chard White Rib