



Vegetable Growing Calendar

For Canadian Hardiness zones 4 and 5

February

You can plant seeds of parsley, leek, celery, celeriac, Spanish onions, globe artichokes, and cardoon. These require a long growing season.

March

In early March, you can plant pepper seeds indoors.

In late March, plant seeds of tomatillos, eggplants, ground cherries, herbs, and green onions indoors. Broccoli and Brussel sprouts for early planting can also be started inside.

If growing under lights, ensure that the lights are 5-10 centimetres at most above the seedlings to avoid weak and spindly plants. Seedlings in windows need the best light available.

April

In early April, plant seeds of tomatoes indoors.

As soon as the ground can be worked, dig new beds. Add amendments, such as composted manure and compost, to new or existing vegetable beds.

In mid- to late April, you can do the first sowings outdoors of cold season vegetables, such as spinach, peas, lettuce, onion sets, cabbages, kohlrabi, radishes and early potatoes, weather permitting. Raised beds and **microclimates** will warm up quicker.

Transplants of broccoli and brussel sprouts can be planted in the garden, having been previously **hardened off**.

You can plant squash, cucumber, and melon seeds indoors.

May

The average date of the last spring frost in eastern Ontario is May 11. As the soil grows warmer, sow annual seeds like beets, carrots, lettuce, late potatoes, and chard directly in the soil. Transplants of cauliflower can be put in.

Begin to **harden off** indoor grown seedlings by transferring them outdoors to a protected area or cold frame. If purchasing seedlings, make sure they are acclimatized to the outdoors before planting. After the Victoria Day weekend, you can plant seedlings of warm season vegetables, such as tomatoes, peppers, tomatillos, eggplants, cucumbers, watermelons, and melons.

Corn and beans can be direct seeded. Plant squash, field cucumbers, and pumpkins by seed or transplants.

Thin seedlings that are growing too thickly. Water well after planting. Set up supports ahead of time for tall crops.

June

Transplants can still be purchased and planted. Be sure to water transplants well initially.

Keep thinning seedlings and weed as needed.

Early sown lettuces, broccoli, and spinach should be maturing. Keep watered, especially in hot weather, to prevent **bolting**.

Remove and compost bolted plants. Or you can save heirloom types for seed after they flower.

Mulch around growing plants. You can fertilize with fish emulsion or top dress with compost if needed.

Stake plants that need support, such as tomatoes.

Hill up potatoes to keep tubers protected from light.

Check plants for any infestations and hand pick bugs. A strong spray from the hose should remove aphids.

July

Spinach and lettuce should be finished. Harvest other crops as they mature. Thin chard and carrots.

Check for pests and hand-pick.

Water vegetables generously in the heat—at least 2 inches per week if rainfall isn't enough (more often for container-grown vegetables).

Fertilize, mulch, and weed as needed.

Continue hilling up potatoes. Shortly after they flower, new potatoes can be gently harvested from the soil under the plant. Leeks also need to be hilled up to create long white stems.

Sow fall vegetables, such as carrots, lettuce, chard, peas, broccoli, and turnips. Keep seedbeds moist, as cool weather crops don't do well in the heat.

August

Summer crops, like tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, and peppers, can be harvested.

Continue to weed and to control pest problems.

As potato tops yellow and die, dig the plants and dry the potatoes in the sun. Pull onions when the tops are dry and fall over, and harvest garlic as it matures. Both need to be sun-dried for storage.

Continue to sow vegetables for fall harvest, such as spinach, chard, carrots, peas, lettuce, and carrots.

Keep seedbeds moist, especially in the heat. Thin seedlings as needed, they grow quickly in the heat and strong sun.

Take notes and photos of the yard for future planning.

September

Baby greens can still be sown.

Continue to harvest warm season crops. Cure (dry in sun) squashes, potatoes, onions, for storage before the first frost.

Thin fall vegetables.



Put diseased plants in the green bin or garbage, and compost un-diseased plants.

Begin to watch the night time temperatures for early frost. Cover warm season crops as necessary to protect them.

October

The average date of the first fall frost in eastern Ontario is October 11. Watch for frost before that date, and harvest the last of the warm season vegetables before frost.

In the face of an imminent frost/freeze, you can cut a tomato plant at soil level, and hang the entire plant upside down in a cool indoor place. The tomatoes will gradually ripen. Or you can pick the tomatoes green, and store them indoors in a paper or plastic bag.

Cover cool weather crops with mulch to protect from frost. Harvest before the hard freezes begin.

Do the vegetable garden clean-up before the first snowfall: Remove all dead vegetable matter. Put diseased plants in the green bin or garbage, and compost un-diseased plants. Rake the soil or bury the surface several inches to kill pupae and overwintering pests.

Plant garlic for harvesting next year.

November

Cover remaining vegetables to protect them from the cold. Continue to mulch. Kale, Brussels sprouts, spinach, and leeks may still be growing if the ground is not frozen.

Definitions

Bolt: when a plant rapidly goes to seed, the leaves become bitter as a result.

Warm season vegetables: vegetables that cannot tolerate frost and thrive in heat.

Cool season/weather vegetables: vegetables with varying frost tolerance that suffer in heat.

Top dress: to add material on top of a growing bed.

Harden off: the process of gradually acclimatizing an indoor-grown plant to the sun and winds outside.

Thin: to pull out seedlings to create space for the remaining plants to grow.

Mulch: to add organic matter in a layer covering the bed, it keeps out weeds and keeps the temperature and moisture level more consistent.

Microclimate: a small area that has different conditions than the prevailing climate due to some factor: a warm south-facing wall for instance.

Winter

Clean your garden tools.

Review your garden notes and photos to plan changes and additions. Read a garden book, and check out new garden trends in seed and plant catalogues.

Join a garden club or horticultural society.

Resources:

- **Insect information:** www.uoguelph.ca/debu/
- **Soil testing:** www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/resource/soillabs.htm
- **Weed identification:** www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/ontweeds/weedgal.htm

To sign up for **Trowel Talk**, our monthly gardening advice newsletter, email mgottawaeditor@gmail.com. You can view previous copies at www.mgottawa.ca/Trowel_Talk.php

If you are interested in growing your own edible vegetables and fruits, see our online newsletter at www.mgottawa.ca/The_Edible_Garden.php

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