

at a glance

- Successful vegetable production in Idaho depends on proper planting schedules.
- Idaho includes regions representing five United States Department of Agriculture hardiness zones (3–7).
- A combination of hardiness zone and the local microclimate dictates appropriate vegetable planting dates.
- This new vegetable planting date chart provides general guidelines for planting dates across Idaho's hardiness zones.
- Recommended planting dates, provided as date ranges, were compiled using average spring temperatures and may vary depending on the weather in a given spring.

AUTHORS

Andres (Andy) West, Extension Educator,
University of Idaho, Twin Falls County

Spring Vegetable Planting Guide for Idaho

Introduction

Are you new to the area? Did you just move here from another state? Are you starting a new hobby with an intent to produce some fresh vegetables? If so, one question that will arise is, when is the best time to plant my garden?

The answer depends on where you live and which crops you want to plant. Optimal planting dates for vegetables vary widely across the state. Elevation and latitude have an impact on planting dates. Also, some crops should be planted before the average last frost date. Others are best planted after the danger of frost has passed. If you are wondering what you can plant and when you can start planting in your region, this planting guide is for you.

Although the chart published here provides ranges of planting dates, they should be used only as a general guide because the weather can fluctuate from year to year. Consequently, make plans based on the recommended dates, but watch your local weather forecast and adjust actual planting activities a few days earlier or later depending on spring conditions.

The first step in using this planting guide is to determine your local hardiness zone. To find your zone, go to <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/> and enter your zip code. Once you know your hardiness zone, you can use the appropriate columns in the planting guide to estimate the best time for you to plant certain crops in your garden.

Another key point for successful vegetable production in Idaho is understanding the length of the growing season for your local area. Knowing your hardiness zone will not tell you how many frost-free days you will have. One trustworthy source to consult to obtain your area's average first and last frost dates is *The Old Farmer's Almanac* website (<https://www.almanac.com/gardening/frostdates>). Use these dates and frost-free days values to help you to determine which crops you can grow and to refine planting dates.

Another advantage to knowing the number of frost-free days is it improves your ability to choose adapted cultivars. Most crops offer a choice of cultivars that express a wide range of maturity

characteristics. For example, you can get short-day tomatoes (50 days) or long-day tomatoes (90 days). When purchasing seeds or starts, select only those cultivars that fit well within your season length. For specific cultivar recommendations, contact your local county Extension office, your local Master Gardener Program, or a local garden center.

Understanding the difference between cool-season and warm-season vegetables will help as you firm up your planting dates. (See chart; vegetables are listed by cool and warm season.) Cool-season vegetables are those that grow best in temperatures of 50°F–75°F. These vegetables can be planted early in the spring and again in the fall. Warm-season vegetables are those that grow best in temperatures of 70°F–85°F. In short-season areas of Idaho, many warm-season crops benefit from being started indoors and then

transplanted to the outdoor garden when temperatures warm and our last frost has passed. Some cool-season crops also grow best if transplanted. Given these options, this planting guide also provides dates for starting plants indoors.

Additional Reading

Stephen L. Love, Stuart Parkinson, and Kathy Noble. 2009. *Choosing and Growing Adapted Vegetable Varieties*, University of Idaho Extension Bulletin 863, 13 p. <https://www.extension.uidaho.edu/publishing/pdf/BUL/BULO863.pdf>.

Susan M. Bell, W. Michael Colt, Hugh W. Homan, and Dale O. Wilson. 2019 (7th ed.). *Planning an Idaho Vegetable Garden*, University of Idaho Extension Bulletin 775, 42 p. <https://www.extension.uidaho.edu/publishing/pdf/BUL/BULO775.pdf>.

Table 1. General guide of planting dates.

Crop	Zones 3-4			Zones 5-6			Zone 7		
	Start Indoors	Transplant Outdoors	Start Outdoors	Start Indoors	Transplant Outdoors	Start Outdoors	Start Indoors	Transplant Outdoors	Start Outdoors
Cool Season									
Beets			5/15-6/5			4/27-5/18			4/17-5/8
Broccoli	4/17-5/1	5/8-5/29		3/30-4/13	4/13-5/11		3/20-4/3	4/10-5/1	
Brussels sprouts	4/17-5/1	5/1-5/22		3/30-4/13	4/13-5/4		3/20-4/3	4/3-4/24	
Cabbage	4/3-4/17	5/1-5/15		3/16-4/30	4/13-4/27		3/5-3/20	4/3-4/17	
Carrots			4/24-5/8			4/6-4/20			3/27-4/10
Cauliflower	4/17-5/1	5/1-5/15		3/30-4/13	4/13-4/27		3/20-4/3	4/3-4/17	
Collards	4/17-5/1	5/1-5/22		3/30-4/13	4/13-5/4		3/20-4/3	4/3-4/24	
Kale	4/17-5/1	5/1-5/22		3/30-4/13	4/13-5/4		3/20-4/3	4/3-4/24	
Kohlrabi			5/1-5/22			4/13-5/4			4/3-4/24
Leeks	3/20-4/3	5/1-5/22		3/1-3/16	4/13-5/4		2/19-3/5	4/3-4/24	
Lettuce	4/17-5/1	5/15-6/12		3/30-4/13	4/27-5/25		3/20-4/3	4/17-5/15	
Onions			5/1-5/22			4/13-5/4			4/3-4/24
Parsnips			5/8-5/29			4/20-5/11			4/10-5/1
Peas			4/17-5/8			3/30-4/20			3/20-4/10
Potatoes			5/22-6/12			5/4-5/25			4/24-5/15
Radishes			4/3-4/24			3/16-4/6			3/5-3/27
Spinach			4/17-5/8			3/30-4/20			3/20-4/10
Swiss chard	4/17-5/1	5/8-5/15		3/30-4/13	4/20-4/27		3/20-4/3	4/10-4/17	
Turnips			5/1-5/22			4/13-5/4			4/3-4/24
Warm Season									
Beans			6/5-6/26			5/18-6/8			5/8-5/29
Cantaloupe	5/1-5/8	6/12-7/3		4/13-4/20	5/25-6/15		4/3-4/10	5/25-6/15	
Celery	3/20-4/3	6/5-6/19		3/1-3/16	5/18-6/1		2/19-3/5	5/8-5/22	
Corn			5/29-6/6			5/11-5/25			5/15-5/29
Cucumbers	5/1-5/8	6/12-7/3		4/13-4/20	5/25-6/15		4/3-4/10	5/25-6/15	
Eggplant	3/20-4/3	6/12-7/3		3/1-3/16	5/18-6/1		2/19-3/5	5/8-5/22	
Okra			6/12-6/26			5/25-6/8			5/15-5/29
Peppers	3/20-4/3	6/12-7/3		3/1-3/16	5/25-6/15		2/19-3/5	5/15-6/5	
Pumpkins	5/1-5/15	6/12-7/3		4/13-4/27	5/25-6/15		4/3-4/17	5/15-6/5	
Squash	5/1-5/15	6/12-7/3		4/13-4/27	5/25-6/15		4/3-4/17	5/15-6/5	
Sweet Potatoes	5/1-5/8	6/12-7/3		4/13-4/20	5/25-6/15		4/3-4/10	5/15-6/5	
Tomatoes	4/3-4/17	6/5-6/26		3/16-3/30	5/18-6/8		3/5-3/20	5/8-5/29	
Watermelon	5/1-5/8	6/12-7/3		4/13-4/20	5/25-6/15		4/3-4/10	5/15-6/5	

NOTE: This chart is given as a general guide. Idaho has a very diverse climate, with many pockets and microclimates. These dates are general to the zone; actual dates for your given location may vary by one to three weeks (+/-). Contact your local Extension office for the correct dates for your area.