

Vegetable Planting During the Summer Months

By Earl Hockin, Master Gardener

Vegetable gardeners are currently enjoying harvesting the cool season vegetables that they planted in the spring such as radish, peas, cabbage, cauliflower, lettuce, broccoli, etc. They are also enjoying watching their tomato plants produce fruit which will soon be ripening. However, this does not mean you are finished planting. June is the time to be planting all kinds of beans, cucumbers, muskmelons, okra, pumpkins, southern peas, summer and winter squash, sweet corn, and watermelon. June is also suitable for transplanting tomato and eggplant seedlings.

One cool season vegetable that many grow and use all summer long is lettuce. However, lettuce does not germinate when temperature approach 80F. The way to keep growing lettuce throughout the summer is to germinate it indoors in a cool space under light. Put some seed starting soil in a tray or container, spray with water to premoisten it, sprinkle lettuce seed on top, then lightly press them into the soil, but don't cover them. After seeding, monitor the soil and spray with water to keep the soil and seeds moist. When the lettuce has fully germinated move it outside but keep it in the shade so it stays cooler.

Succession planting means that you are planting on a continuous basis to prolong the harvesting period. For example, in our area one can plant bush beans up until the first week of September. If you plant later, it is likely that fall frost will hit and damage the plants before they produce any amount of beans. The general recommendation for succession planting is to look at the date that the first frost typically happens in your zone, then read the seed package to see how long till maturity/harvest and add 10 to 14 days to allow for seed germination to determine the latest date for sowing seeds. For example, if your first frost date is October 24th and the time to maturity for the plant is 8 weeks, then subtract 70 days or 10 weeks from October 24th. Therefore, you can plant up until August 15th.

The advantage of succession planting is having some crop maturing over a longer time. By doing succession planting of smaller amounts several times, you can continue to enjoy the freshly harvested vegetable throughout the summer and fall. For example, for a family of 4 you might want 1lb of snap green beans for a recipe. That would typically mean 35 to 40 beans. This would typically require 7 to 10 plants at a time to be able to harvest several times. Thus, you might want to plant 7 to 10 plants about every two weeks between the last week of April and the second week of August. This will mean you can be harvesting 1lb of fresh beans weekly, or more often, from the end of June to the middle of October.

Vegetables that are particularly suitable for succession planting to be harvested from late spring/early summer till fall frost include bush and pole beans, carrots, Swiss chard, cucumbers, eggplant, muskmelons, okra, peppers, summer and winter squash, corn, and watermelon.

Bush and pole bean seeds can be sown as late as the middle of August for succession planting and for fall harvest. Beets can be sown until the third week of August, cucumbers until the second week of August. Kale and Swiss chard, which are cold hardy, can be sown until the end of July for fall harvest. Broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage seedlings should be transplanted by July 20th. Transplant Chinese cabbage seedlings by the first week of August. Eggplant seedlings can be transplanted until the middle of August for fall harvest. Muskmelon, corn, watermelon, and pepper seeds should be sown no later than July 20th. If you use a form of protection from frost, such as hoophouse or row cover, you may extend the season by about 2 weeks. However, some of the truly warm season vegetables such as okra will typically slow down their growth as the days get shorter and cooler.

“Big ideas for small gardens: Succession planting,”

<https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-news/succession-planting>

“Succession Planting,”

<https://extension.wvu.edu/lawn-gardening-pests/gardening/garden-management/succession-planting>

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