

Succession Vegetable Gardening (published 2025-04-05)

By Earl Hockin, Master Gardener

Succession gardening can refer to different approaches to gain more productivity and save time when growing vegetables. The traditional meaning is that you plant the same crop more than one time during the growing season. This lets you harvest all season long. The advantage is that you don't have to harvest and process a full crop for canning, freezing or dehydration. Rather, plant or sow a few seeds, enjoy harvesting and eating and then a bit later repeat the enjoyment. To do so, check when you can first transplant or sow the seeds, and how long it will be before harvest. For seeds, the best source of information is typically the seed package as different varieties of the same vegetable can have different times to sprout and mature.

For example, in my garden, when planting bush beans with 10 days to germinate and 55 days to mature, I will typically leave an interval of 2 weeks between plantings. I sow the first 10 to 12 seeds on April 20<sup>th</sup>. My second group of 10 to 12 seeds on May 4<sup>th</sup>, again on May 18<sup>th</sup>, June 1<sup>st</sup>, June 15<sup>th</sup>, June 29<sup>th</sup>, and July 13<sup>th</sup>. My last date for planting bush bean seeds will be the middle of August.

Cucumbers take an average of about 60 days to mature. For these, I leave three weeks between plantings. I will transplant two cucumber plants the third week of April. My second planting will be the second week of May then the first week of June, the last week of June, the middle of July and the beginning of August.

Spinach takes 40 days to maturity after sprouting or transplanting. It is cool season tolerant, so I sow seeds the middle of March. I will then cover with row cover to protect from frost. I sow seeds for six or eight plants and assume given that the soil temperature is about 40F, that it will take about 10 or 12 days to germinate then 40 days to maturity. As the soil temperature rises, they will germinate more quickly. When the soil temperature is about 60F they will germinate in about seven days. My second planting will be the first week of April then the second week of April and continue basically every seven to ten days until the middle of June as spinach is a cool season vegetable. I then begin planting it again the second or third week of September and on a continuing basis until the middle of October. I typically plant two or three times more than in the summer and cover with row cover as the spinach will stop growing by mid-November but will survive and begin growing again early February when I can start harvesting.

Another variation of succession planting is to plant different varieties of the same plant. Different varieties of tomatoes ripen at different rates. The fastest to ripen are cherry tomatoes, followed by paste tomatoes and then the large varieties. Different varieties of broccoli and cabbage will mature at different dates, too. Check dates to maturity on the seed packet to choose ones with significantly different dates to maturity.

Some resources about succession planting are listed below.

“Planting Vegetables in Succession,”

<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/planting-vegetables-succession/>

“Harvest all season long with succession sowing,”

<https://extension.missouri.edu/news/harvest-all-season-long-with-succession-sowing>

“Succession Planting,”

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

“Succession Planting in the Vegetable Garden,”

<https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/hillsboroughco/2025/03/10/succession-planting-in-the-vegetable-garden/>

For more information about gardening, visit UTHORT's YouTube site for helpful videos:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjS3d1IklH1OZ1Z2qPvhgfQ>

Or Washington County's YouTube site: <https://www.youtube.com/@utextensionwashingtoncounty>

**How do I ask a question?**

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at [www.netmga.net](http://www.netmga.net). Click the link at the top of the page, "ASK A MASTER GARDENER" to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.

*The Master Gardener Program is offered by the University of Tennessee Extension. The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to train people as horticultural-educated volunteers. These volunteers work in partnership with the local Extension office in their counties to expand educational outreach, providing home gardeners with researched-based information.*