



**ORGANIC**  
**Gardening**

# SPRING PLANNER

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PLANNER

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## CONTENTS

- 5 **How to Use This Planner**
- 6 **Plan a New Garden**
- 7 **Garden Bed Planner**
- 8 **Spring Planting Guide**
- 10 **Good Strategies for Interplanting**
- 11 **Vegetable Planting and Spacing Guide**
- 12 **Garden Bed Grid**
- 14 **Garden Record**
- 15 **How to Use This Journal**
- 16 **To-Do Lists**
  - 16 Gulf Coast and Hawaii
  - 17 Northeast and Midwest
  - 18 Northern Tier
  - 19 Pacific Northwest
  - 20 Southeast
  - 21 Southwest
- 22 **Journal**
  - 22 March
  - 24 April
  - 26 May



## HOW TO USE THIS PLANNER

The Organic Gardening Spring Planner is meant to be a gardening adviser and friend. This first section gives you all the information you need to plan and plant your garden. The journal section, which begins on page 15, has how-to tips for tending your vegetable and flower gardens in spring.

This guide will help you figure the best times to plant your veggies and flowers—based on the last spring frost date where you live.

To plan a garden that satisfies your needs—both aesthetically and foodwise—start on pages 6 and 7. You can draw all the specifics on the grid on pages 12 and 13. If you want to use the grid for more than one garden, be sure to copy it before writing on it.

You'll also find information on spacing your plants and interplanting—putting together certain combinations—which will result in the healthiest garden and maximum yield. To keep track of what's working and what isn't, you'll find journal pages for March, April, and May, and on page 14, you can record information about your favorite plants. Copy the Garden Record page, if needed.

For information on the specific vegetables and flowers you've decided to grow, go to [organicgardening.com](http://organicgardening.com).

# Plan a New Garden

The symmetry of rows of colorful edibles is heaven to many gardeners. But if you find the traditional approach to be boring, consider other geometric possibilities such as an octagon or pie wedges.

Once you've conjured the possibilities for your space, consider that in most climates, vegetables, fruits, and herbs grow best in raised beds. Raised garden beds provide infinitely better drainage than do beds built flush with the soil. They also heat up faster in spring, adding days (or even weeks) to your growing season. And they allow for far easier soil amendment.

Prepare your new garden beds before you buy your plants. Loosen the soil with a shovel, garden fork, and/or tiller to a depth of at least 8" and add several inches of compost. If you're making raised beds, build them up 12 to 18" above path grade and fill them with the ideal mix of topsoil, compost, and other amendments. In either case, if the soil is sandy, mix in an extra helping of compost.

Many gardeners like to support their raised beds with wooden or plastic frames; others just mound up the soil. Do not frame your garden beds with creosote-laden railroad ties. New types of pressure-treated woods are safer than those produced in the past, but the best choices for

framing vegetable beds are natural materials. Naturally rot-resistant cedar makes an attractive raised-bed frame and also weathers nicely. Or consider stone or brick to enclose your planting areas.

Vegetable gardeners have learned that beds built no broader than 4 to 5', separated by paths, allow you to reach into the middle of each bed without stepping into it and compacting the soil. And when the soil is at shin level, weeding and harvesting are less of a strain on your back.

Flower garden experts offer these tips for an attractive display: Put tall plants in the back of the bed, short ones in front. Cluster plants in odd-numbered groups of three or five. Set the plants in a repeated pattern (but not a rigid structure) across the bed to create a visual rhythm.

See "Garden Bed Planner" on the opposite page for suggested vegetable garden arrangements. Then, once you've gathered all your ideas, use the grid on pages 12 and 13 to draw your own veggie or flower garden plan.

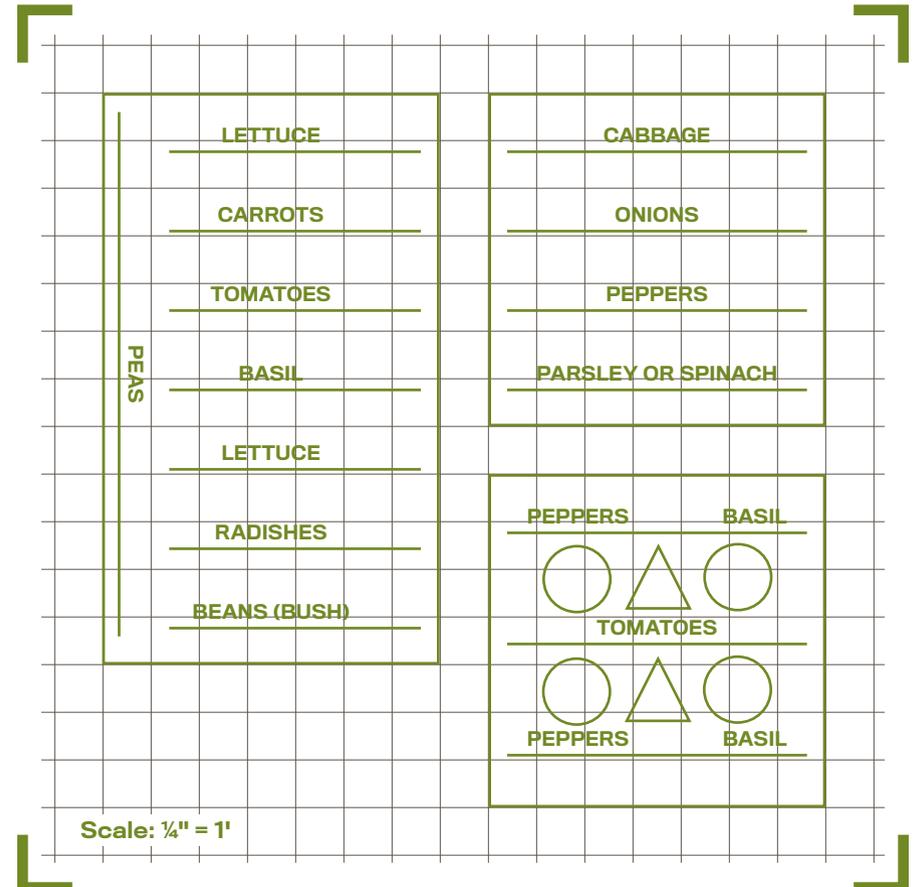
# Garden Bed Planner

To get the most out of your space, plan your garden before you plant. Decide which plants you'd like to grow. Then look at "Good Strategies for Interplanting" on page 10 for ideas on how to arrange your plantings.

Be sure to rotate your tomato and brassica (cabbage) family crops at least every 3 years. If you don't, the soil will become an ideal breeding ground for diseases that harm those plants. For the best soil management, keep your garden charts to

refer to year to year.

Here are some sample garden arrangements to help you get started in placing your own plants. Then plot out your plan using the grid on pages 12 and 13.



# Spring Planting Guide

Timing is everything. To start your seeds on time, you need to know the last spring frost (LSF) date for your area of the country. If you don't know this date, contact your regional cooperative extension office ([csrees.usda.gov/Extension](http://csrees.usda.gov/Extension)).

The chart "Starting Seeds Indoors," below, will help you determine when to sow seeds indoors so you can transplant to the garden at the proper time. Use column A to figure your outdoor planting date for transplants; write the date in column B. Then count back the number of weeks it takes each plant to reach transplant size (subtract weeks in column C from date in column B) to figure your indoor

planting date for seeds; write that date in column D.

Some plants can also be direct-seeded into your garden. Use the chart "Starting Seeds Outdoors in Spring" on the opposite page to determine your outdoor sowing date for these plants.

Spacing your seeds and transplants is also critical. See "Vegetable Planting and Spacing Guide" on page 11 for more information.

## STARTING SEEDS INDOORS

Last Spring Frost (LSF) Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	Plant	A. When to Plant Outdoors Relative to LSF	B. Outdoor Planting Date	C. Weeks to Reach Transplant Size	D. Indoor Sowing Date
Survive Heavy Frost (26-30°F)	Broccoli	2 weeks before LSF		4-6 weeks	
	Brussels sprouts	2 weeks before LSF		4-6 weeks	
	Cabbage	4 weeks before LSF		4-6 weeks	
	Chard, Swiss*	2 weeks before LSF		4-6 weeks	
	Collards	4 weeks before LSF		4-6 weeks	
	Kale	4 weeks before LSF		4-6 weeks	
	Kohlrabi*	4 weeks before LSF		4-6 weeks	
	Peas*	6-8 weeks before LSF		3-4 weeks	
	Spinach*	3-6 weeks before LSF		4-6 weeks	
	Turnips	4 weeks before LSF		3-4 weeks	
Survive Light Frost (30-32°F)	Arugula*	3-4 weeks before LSF		4-5 weeks	
	Beets*	2 weeks before LSF		4-6 weeks	
	Cauliflower	2 weeks before LSF		4-6 weeks	
	Lettuce, head	3-4 weeks before LSF		4-5 weeks	

\*Note: Can also be direct-seeded into the garden. See "Starting Seeds Outdoors in Spring" on the opposite page.

## STARTING SEEDS INDOORS (CONT.)

Last Spring Frost (LSF) Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	Plant	A. When to Plant Outdoors Relative to LSF	B. Outdoor Planting Date	C. Weeks to Reach Transplant Size	D. Indoor Sowing Date
Frost-Tender	Cucumbers*	1-2 weeks after LSF		3-4 weeks	
	Eggplant	2-3 weeks after LSF		8-10 weeks	
	Marigolds	1-2 weeks after LSF		6-8 weeks	
	Melons*	2 weeks after LSF		3-4 weeks	
	Okra*	2-4 weeks after LSF		4-6 weeks	
	Peppers	2 weeks after LSF		6-14 weeks	
	Squash*	2 weeks after LSF		3-4 weeks	
	Tomatoes	1-2 weeks after LSF		6-8 weeks	
	Zinnia**	1-2 weeks after LSF		4-6 weeks	

\*Note: Can also be direct-seeded into the garden. See "Starting Seeds Outdoors in Spring" below.  
 \*\*Note: Do not transplant well; use peat pots, or direct-seed. See below.

## STARTING SEEDS OUTDOORS IN SPRING

The following plants can be direct-seeded into your garden.

Plant	When to Plant Outdoors Relative to LSF	Outdoor Sowing Date
Arugula	2 weeks before LSF	
Beans	2 weeks after LSF	
Beets	0-2 weeks before LSF	
Carrots	2-3 weeks before LSF	
Chard, Swiss	0-2 weeks before LSF	
Corn	2 weeks after LSF	
Cucumbers	2 weeks after LSF	
Lettuce, leaf	2 weeks before LSF	
Melons	2 weeks after LSF	
Nasturtium	1-2 weeks before LSF	
Okra	2 weeks after LSF	
Peas	4-6 weeks before LSF	
Pumpkins	1 week after LSF	
Spinach	4-6 weeks before LSF	
Squash	1 week after LSF	
Sunflowers	2-3 weeks after LSF	
Zinnia	2-3 weeks after LSF	

# Good Strategies for Interplanting

Some plants make particularly good neighbors because of their different root patterns, growth habits, or heights. Use plant differences to your advantage by interplanting crops that give each other needed shade or room to grow.

## Plants with Complementary Root Growth

Beans–Carrots  
 Beans–Celery  
 Beans–Corn  
 Beans–Cucumbers  
 Beans–Onions  
 Beans–Radishes  
 Beans–Squash  
 Cabbage–Onions  
 Carrots–Onions  
 Chard, Swiss–Cucumbers  
 Corn–Lettuce  
 Corn–Potatoes  
 Eggplant–Onions  
 Kohlrabi–Beets  
 Leeks–Carrots  
 Lettuce–Carrots–Onions  
 Lettuce–Parsnips  
 Lettuce–Radishes  
 Peas–Radishes  
 Peas–Turnips  
 Peppers–Onions  
 Salsify–Lettuce  
 Spinach–Onions

## Plants with Complementary Top Growth

Beans (bush)–Celery  
 Beans (bush)–Radishes  
 Beans (bush)–Tomatoes (staked)  
 Beans (pole)–Corn  
 Beans (pole)–Corn–Squash  
 Beets–Kohlrabi  
 Cabbage–Chives  
 Cabbage–Onions  
 Cabbage–Peppers  
 Cabbage–Tomatoes  
 Cabbage or Chinese cabbage–Corn  
 Cabbage–family crops–Carrots  
 Carrots–Leeks  
 Carrots–Onions  
 Cucumbers–Okra  
 Cucumbers or squash–Cabbage  
 Cucumbers or squash–Corn  
 Eggplant–Onions  
 Lettuce–Carrots–Onions  
 Lettuce–Corn  
 Lettuce–Onions  
 Parsley–Leeks

Peas (trellised)–Cabbage–family crops, carrots, kohlrabi, lettuce, radishes, spinach, or turnips

Peppers–Onions  
 Potatoes–Corn  
 Radishes–Lettuce  
 Spinach–Onions

## Plants That Provide Shade–Plants That Tolerate Shade

Beans (bush)–Celery  
 Beans (bush or pole)–Lettuce  
 Beans (bush or pole)–Spinach  
 Brassica–family crops–Celery  
 Brassica–family crops–Lettuce  
 Brassica–family crops–Spinach  
 Corn–Lettuce  
 Cucumbers (trellised)–Celery  
 Cucumbers (trellised)–Lettuce  
 Eggplant–Celery  
 Okra–Cucumbers  
 Peas (trellised)–Lettuce  
 Peas (trellised)–Spinach  
 Tomatoes (staked)–Lettuce

# Vegetable Planting and Spacing Guide

Plant	Seed Planting Depth	Intensive Spacing	Conventional Spacing	
		(distance between plants in all directions)	(distance between plants in row)	(distance between rows)
Asparagus (crowns)	6–10"		24"	36–48"
Beans, snap (bush)	1"	4–6"	2–4"	18–36"
Beets	½"	2–6"	2–4"	12–30"
Broccoli*	¼"	15–18"	12–24"	18–36"
Brussels sprouts*	½"	18"	18–24"	30–36"
Cabbage*	¼"	15–18"	12–24"	24–36"
Carrots	¼"	2–3"	1–3"	16–30"
Cauliflower*	½"	18"	24"	36"
Chard, Swiss	½"	9"	9"	18"
Collards	½"	15"	15"	36"
Corn	1"	18"	8–12"	30–42"
Cucumbers	½–1"	12–18"	3–6"	14–42"
Eggplant*	¼"	24"	24"	24–36"
Lettuce, leaf	¼"	6–9"	8–12"	12–24"
Melons	½"	36"	36–96"	72–96"
Okra	½"	18"	10–14"	24–48"
Onions (sets)	1"	4–6"	1–4"	16–24"
Peas	1"	2–6"	1–3"	24–48"
Peppers*	½"	12–15"	12–24"	18–36"
Potatoes	4"	10–12"	6–12"	30–42"
Radishes	¼"	2–3"	½–1"	8–18"
Spinach	¼"	4–6"	2–6"	12–36"
Squash, summer and winter	½–1"	24–36"	39–96"	72–96"
Tomatoes (staked)*	¼–½"	18–24"	12–24"	36–48"

\*Note: Rarely direct-seeded into the garden.

# Garden Bed Grid



Scale: 1/4" = 1'

# Garden Record

Keep track of the plants in your garden so you can repeat your successes and troubleshoot when a plant hasn't performed as expected. (Copy this page, as needed.)

Plant name: .....

Where purchased: .....

Seed sown indoors (date): .....

Seed sown in garden or seedling planted in garden (date): .....

Feeding notes: .....

Diseases/pests: .....

Treatments for diseases/pests: .....

Harvest dates: .....

Notes: .....

Plant name: .....

Where purchased: .....

Seed sown indoors (date): .....

Seed sown in garden or seedling planted in garden (date): .....

Feeding notes: .....

Diseases/pests: .....

Treatments for diseases/pests: .....

Harvest dates: .....

Notes: .....

Plant name: .....

Where purchased: .....

Seed sown indoors (date): .....

Seed sown in garden or seedling planted in garden (date): .....

Feeding notes: .....

Diseases/pests: .....

Treatments for diseases/pests: .....

Harvest dates: .....

Notes: .....

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# HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

This section of the Organic Gardening Spring Planner is designed for you to make notes about what's going on in your garden in spring.

You'll find a to-do list for the growing region where you live. Journal pages for the 3 months of March, April, and May follow.

Following all the tips and journal pages, you'll find several "Garden Record" pages where you can record information about particular plants that you have tried.

We hope you find this journal to be a handy tool and reference.

For the purposes of this journal, we've designated six gardening regions according to typical growing conditions rather than by USDA zones.

## STARTING SEEDS INDOORS

Page	Gardening Region	States
16	GULF COAST AND HAWAII	Alabama, Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi
17	NORTHEAST AND MIDWEST	Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Washington DC, West Virginia
18	NORTHERN TIER	Alaska, Maine, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Canada
19	PACIFIC NORTHWEST	California (northern), Idaho, Oregon, Washington
20	SOUTHEAST	Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia
21	SOUTHWEST	Arizona, California (southern), Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah



## TO-DO LIST: GULF COAST AND HAWAII

**Grow cover crops**, such as sun hemp and crowder peas, to build soil health. Once they mature, cut them down and till them under before planting.

**Sow seeds** for arugula, basil, beets, broccoli, green beans, collards, cucumbers, eggplant, Chinese greens, lettuce, hot peppers, okra, radishes, and cherry tomatoes in tilled soil.

**Try some quick-maturing varieties** of cucumbers, squash, and zucchini. You may luck out and get a good harvest before the insect and disease explosion of the hot season makes them hard to keep alive.

**Water new plantings** thoroughly. Soil dries out quickly in wind and midday heat, and even frequent rain showers may not fully soak the soil. A thick layer of mulch or compost and a drip irrigation system can conserve water.

**Cover your compost** to keep the sun and wind from drying it out. Bury it in soil or cover it with straw.

**Remove weeds now**, before they flower and seed.

**Monitor for insects** and take steps to control them. A good shot of insecticidal soap will usually take care of aphids, mealybugs, scale, and spider mites if you catch them early. Use the two-block method for adult-stage grasshoppers: Get two blocks of wood and bring them together quickly with the grasshopper in between!

**Scout for snails and slugs** that gravitate toward seedlings and brassica crops. Control them by putting copper tape or diatomaceous earth around the borders of beds.

**Feed gardenias** in March to have flowers for May Day. Use bat and seabird guano applied lightly around flowering shrubs or mixed with water to create a tea for a foliar feed.

**Start seeds** for warm season annuals, such as marigolds, cosmos, salvia, vinca, and morning glories, in flats in shade to part-shade in April and May. Adjust them slowly to full sun when you transplant them.

**Apply compost** to ginger and other tropical flowers. Keep their fallen leaves around their roots, without touching the stems. Do the same with bananas.

**Feed fruit and flower trees** in May. Spread finished compost or composted chicken manure thinly and evenly over an 18-inch circle around the tree, leaving a 2-inch buffer right around the trunk.

**Build fruiting and flowering plants' resistance** to insects, fungal diseases, and sooty mold by giving frequent foliar feedings of liquid kelp or seaweed.

**Enjoy the blossoms** of tropical trees, especially the Golden Trumpet (*Tabebuia argentea*, aka Silver Trumpet), with its masses of yellow flowers. Even when not in flower, its corky bark and unusual, almost "bonsai" shape make it an interesting attraction. Its light olive leaves harmonize well with most landscapes.

**Harvest bananas** immediately when the fruit turns yellow, or when the ridges have nearly disappeared from the green fruit.

## TO-DO LIST: NORTHEAST AND MIDWEST

**Prepare your garden soil** once it has dried out and crumbles easily in your hand. Turn under winter-killed cover crops in early spring. Incorporate green cover crops such as winter rye into the soil at least 2 weeks before your transplant date. Add compost.

**Top-dress** garden beds with compost.

**Use mulch** to deter weeds; reapply as needed.

**Keep all newly planted crops** well watered if Mother Nature doesn't cooperate by providing sufficient rain.

**Presprout peas** and potatoes in advance of setting them out in the garden to give them a head start.

**Plant peas and spinach** as soon as the ground can be worked.

**Start seeds of cool-season vegetables** such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, and kale indoors under grow lights in March if you didn't start them in February.

**Plant cool-season vegetables** such as mustard greens, lettuce, peas, radishes, and spinach in cold- or warmframes (coldframes with heat cables or another heat source) in late March or early April.

**Start seeds of warm-season vegetables** such as eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes indoors the first week in April to transplant into the garden in late May.

**Direct-seed** beets, carrots, Swiss chard, collards, lettuce, parsnips, peas, and spinach and place onion sets into the garden in April. Set out hardy seedlings such as cabbage, leafy greens, onions, pansies, and snapdragons, allowing them to

harden-off for a day or two in a protected area.

**Plant warm-season vegetable plants**—cucumbers, eggplant, melons, peppers, squash, and tomatoes—around the safe planting-out date. Check with your cooperative extension office to find the last spring frost date for your locality.

**Go ahead and pick** those long-awaited first asparagus spears in April and May.

**Start seeds of cool-season flowers** such as coleus, larkspur, marigolds, snapdragons, statice, verbenas, and zinnias indoors under grow lights in March. Put them in the garden in late May.

**Start seeds of herbs**, such as basil, dill, and parsley, in April.

**Direct-seed** foxgloves and hollyhocks in the garden in April.

**Set out warm-season bulbs**, such as dahlias, cannas, and gladiolus, in May.

**Plant bareroot roses** in April. Place a handful of bone meal in the hole. Mound the soil up around the plant to within 1 inch of the top. Remove the soil as new growth appears.

**Dig, divide, and transplant** perennials, such as asters, that bloom in summer or fall.

**Place supports** near top-heavy plants such as delphiniums and peonies—in anticipation of many blooms.

**Remove faded lilac blossoms.** To ensure a healthy, vigorous plant, prune up to one-third of the branches if needed.

## TO-DO LIST: NORTHERN TIER

### Use a good seed-starting mix.

Purchase a mix labeled for seed starting; the bag should feel comparatively light. Or make your own by combining equal amounts of peat moss, perlite, and vermiculite.

**Put seeded flats** in a warm place to germinate. Check them daily (twice daily is better), and at the first sign of growth, move them under fluorescent lights.

**Water seedlings gently** or add water to the tray beneath them. Don't let seedlings dry out or get soggy.

**Feed seedlings** weak compost tea or ¼-strength diluted fish emulsion. Don't overfertilize.

**Harden-off purchased or homegrown seedlings.** About 2 weeks before your planting-out date, take your little plants outside for an hour or so. Gradually lengthen the time that they are out.

**Soak peas overnight** in warm water so they'll germinate faster. Use a container big enough to allow them to swell to double their size.

### Direct-seed cool-season

**vegetables** such as beets, lettuce, peas, and spinach as soon as the soil can be worked. Plant them at intervals of 1 or 2 weeks for a continuous harvest.

**Give overwintering geraniums** a severe cutting-back in March, and they'll be bushy and ready to bloom again in a few weeks.

**Divide most perennial** flowers in spring. When the new growth is a couple of inches high, dig up the clump and pull or cut it apart. Add compost to the hole when you replant them. (Do not divide or transplant peonies at this time.)

**Put in supports** for heavy plants such as peonies in May while they are still small.

**Start dianthus,** pansies, petunias, and snapdragons indoors late in March.

**Sow poppies** and sweet peas in the garden. (Shovel snow first if you must!)



## TO-DO LIST: PACIFIC NORTHWEST

**Turn under cover crops** a few weeks before planting to allow them to decompose. Wait until the soil is dry and crumbly before tilling it. For small areas, slice below the green growth with a shovel and turn the crop over so that only dirt shows.

**Test the soil** and amend it based on the results. Your regional cooperative extension office can recommend tests or testing companies.

**Side-dress fall-planted garlic** with compost and soil amendments high in nitrogen. Larger bulbs will be the result.

**Plant peas** when a week of warm weather is forecast in March. Presprout them indoors.

**Sow seeds for salad greens** or set out transplants monthly, starting in April, to harvest these veggies year-round. Try arugula, chard, cress, endive, kale, lettuce, mustard, and radicchio. Grow them a couple of inches apart in all directions and harvest the leaves once they are 2" tall. Thin some to grow tall to use as cooking greens.

**Sow seeds indoors** or plant purchased seedlings of broccoli and cabbage. Plant early-, mid-, and late-season varieties for staggered harvests.

**Direct-sow carrots** in April.

**Plant potatoes** from March through May for summer and fall harvests.

**Plant heat-loving plants** such as peppers, squash, and tomatoes after the last spring frost. Grow your own transplants by sowing in February or March.

**Direct-sow beans** every few weeks from after the last spring frost until mid-July.

**Plant herb seedlings** such as oregano, parsley, and rosemary in a sunny spot close to the back door for easy access when cooking. Don't plant basil until after the last spring frost.

**Apply plastic mulch** to help increase the soil temperature faster for strong, early growth of heat-loving plants such as cucumbers, melons, and peppers.

**Protect seedlings and transplants** from frost with permeable row covers. When the edges are buried completely to form a tight barrier, row covers also protect carrots, mustard, and radishes from the fly that gives birth to root maggots. They keep out flea beetles, too, which chew tiny holes in arugula, bok choy, and mizuna leaves.

**Harvest twice weekly,** cutting everything that is ripe, to encourage plants to continue producing.

**Divide and move hardy perennials** to better or additional locations in April. Plant them even though some may not yet be blooming. They get established better because spring rain reduces the need for vigilant watering.

**Brighten a shady spot** with low mounds of colorful pansies that will bloom until midsummer.

**Wait until the last frost date** (in May) to plant frost-sensitive flowers such as impatiens. Hold back hanging fuchsia baskets until then also.

## TO-DO LIST: SOUTHEAST

**Prepare your garden beds** deeply and well. Do not work the soil—with spade, fork, or tiller—until it is dry enough to crumble in your hand.

**Rotate your crops**, even on a small scale. Planting tomatoes in the same place year after year invites disease-causing organisms to build up in the soil.

**Start warm-season vegetables** indoors beginning in March. These include eggplant, peppers, squash, and tomatoes.

**Direct-seed beets**, carrots (don't delay), Swiss chard, lettuce, mâche, mesclun, mustard, radishes, spinach, and turnips in March. Put in onion sets, too.

**Plant cool-weather vegetable seedlings** in March, too—including broccoli, cabbage, Swiss chard, greens, lettuce, spinach, and root crops. It's not too late to also plant peas and potatoes.

**Mulch potatoes** with straw as soon as the sprouts emerge from the soil.

**Start warm-season veggies**—direct-seeding beans, corn, and cucumbers and transplanting tomatoes (melons and squash can go in as seed or transplants)—after your last spring frost date.

**Rotate your tomatoes** rather than planting them in the same spot year after year. Tomato diseases can easily build up in the soil and decrease or destroy your chances of harvesting the golden and red globes.

**Wait until the soil is warm** (May) to set out eggplant and peppers and sow okra and black-eyed peas.

**Spread row covers** over plants in case the cold returns. Just be sure to

remove them on hot days.

**Harvest cool-season crops** regularly and keep them watered and weeded.

**Plant annual vines** to shade heat-sensitive plants from summer sun.

**Crush the eggs** and larvae of insect pests, such as cabbage moths and bean beetles, if you find them.

**Search for slugs and snails.** Go out at night with a light, a container, a strong stomach, and an iron will, and handpick and destroy these pests. Or try beer traps, diatomaceous earth, or ashes—especially around strawberries and leafy greens.

**Deadhead daffodils** when blooms droop, but leave the foliage to recharge the bulbs for next year. Cut the leaves back after they turn brown.

**Direct-seed calendulas**, cosmos, lavatera, nasturtiums, and snapdragons in March.

**Plant annuals** such as asters, cleome, coreopsis, marigolds, nicotiana, petunias, sunflowers, and zinnias in May. Or start them indoors in March or April and set the transplants in the garden in May.

**Sow sunflowers** and tithonia (“Mexican sunflower”) where their height will mesh with your garden design.

**Set out caladium corms** in shady spots, or mix them with coleus in containers in March.

**Support tall or heavy perennials** such as hollyhocks and peonies before they are unwieldy. Small or cut-down tomato cages work well for peonies and are hidden by the leaves.

**Side-dress roses** with an organic fertilizer in May, and keep topdressing with compost.

## TO-DO LIST: SOUTHWEST

**Pull back mulch** from the garden to allow the soil to heat up quickly and to eliminate that habitat for pill bugs and other seedling eaters. Warm soil will let you plant in early March.

**Replace mulch** around shrubs, trees, and anything else that will benefit from a cooler soil. First apply a layer of compost to feed the soil.

**Go to town** direct-sowing Chinese and Napa cabbages, kale, lettuce, mustard, spinach, and short-season root crops in March for a late spring harvest. Harvest leafy greens often or they will bolt.

**Sow black-eyed peas**, crowder peas, and purple hull peas into the garden. Consider growing a black bean such as ‘Black Coco’, which can be eaten as a snap bean or shelled bean and thrives in dry years.

**Set out early transplants** of cukes, squash, and tomatoes. Plant tomatoes that will set fruit in the heat—these include many small-fruited varieties and ‘Hawaiian Tropic’ and ‘Heartland’ slicing tomatoes.

**Sow okra**, peanuts, sweet potatoes, and climbing malabar spinach indoors 8 weeks before transplanting or direct-seed them outdoors when night temperatures are above 50°F. Set out eggplant, melons, and peppers also once the soil has warmed.

**Direct-seed vegetables** from mid-April to early May to allow for a July harvest. Put in amaranth, beans, pumpkins, winter squash, and watermelon. Plant sweet potato slips, too.

**Plant potatoes** in March and mulch them with 6 inches of straw as soon as the sprouts emerge from the soil.

**Start seeds** of peppers and tomatoes in containers to transplant in July for the fall garden.

**Harvest** and enjoy your asparagus!

**Stop watering** onions, garlic, and shallots when the foliage begins to turn yellow.

**Set out** sweet potato slips on a cloudy day in May.

**Keep floating row covers** handy in case cold weather or even a freeze threatens your late-spring garden.

**Feed perennial herbs** such as salad burnet, marjoram, mint, rosemary, sage, and thyme. It's wise to grow mint in a pot or enclosed area since it can spread quickly and overtake the herb garden.

**Plant roses** in March. Prune growing roses very early in March if you have missed the recommended mid-February pruning.

**Plant a cutting garden.** In March, direct-seed coneflowers, gayfeather, salvias, and yarrow (in several colors). Add annuals such as crested cockscombs, purple fountain grass, several varieties of sunflowers, and zinnias.

**Plant summer bulbs** such as tuberous begonias, dahlias, gladiolus, and lilies in late March through April.

**Direct-seed annuals** such as globe amaranth, sunflowers, and zinnias in May.

**Propagate** groundcovers and hostas in shady areas.

# JOURNAL: MARCH

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Weather notes: .....

Soil observations: .....

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31	

Harvest or bloom notes: .....

Problems and solutions: .....

# JOURNAL: APRIL

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Weather notes: .....

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Soil observations: .....

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Harvest or bloom notes: .....

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Problems and solutions: .....

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# JOURNAL: MAY

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Weather notes: .....

Soil observations: .....

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Harvest or bloom notes: .....

Problems and solutions: .....