

When to Start Your Vegetable Seeds

The following charts show when to plant Early Season Vegetables (“cold lovers”) and Warm Season Vegetables (“heat lovers”). Optimum soil temperature for seed germination is given. As a general guideline, plant “cold lovers” when the average soil temperature is 7 °C (approx. late April). To take the soil temperature, insert a soil thermometer 5-8 cm into the soil over several days and calculate the average temperature. “Heat lovers” like to be planted in soil that averages 15 °C (approx. late May). If you plant into raised beds, the temperature will rise much faster and you can plant sooner. However, heat lovers may need a light fabric cover if planted before the end of May, to protect against sudden, late season frosts.

Seeding Indoors: This is a wonderful way to start the season. You will need a LED or fluorescent light (preferred) or some extra space in a very bright window. As a beginner, you may want to start by purchasing strong, healthy looking plants from a nursery or garden centre. See reverse for info on hardening off your plants.

Early Season Veggies	Seeding Inside	Transplanting Outside	Direct Seeding Outside	Optimum Soil Temp. °C
Leeks	early March or purchase seedlings	early May	season too short	10-25
Onions	seeds late March or purchase sets	plant sets early May, seedlings late May	-	10-30
Broccoli	early April	early to mid-May	season too short	7-30
Brussels sprouts	early April	early to mid-May	season too short	7-30
Cabbage	early April	early to mid-May	season too short	7-30
Cauliflower	early April	early to mid-May	season too short	7-30
Kohlrabi	early April	early to mid-May	mid-May to mid-July	5-30
Kale	early April	early to mid-May	early April or late fall	7-24
Lettuce	mid-April	mid-May	early May to mid-July, fall	5-27
Peas	no	no	late April to June	5-24
Spinach	no	no	late April until end of May; or seed in fall	7-24
Radishes	no	no	late April to June, again in early August	7-30
Carrots	no	no	late April to early June	7-30
Rutabaga, Turnips	no	no	late April to late May	7-30
Fava beans	no	no	late April to late May	10-21
Beets	no	no	late April to late May	10-30
Parsnips	no	no	late April to late May	10-21
Swiss Chard	no	no	late April to late May	10-30
Potatoes	no	no	mid-May	10-25

Warm Season Veggies	Seeding Inside	Transplanting Outside	Direct Seeding Outside	Optimum Soil Temp. °C
Pepper	early March	late May (with protection) to early June	season too short	15-35
Eggplant	mid-March	late May with protection	season too short	15-32
Tomatoes	late March, early April	late May with protection	season too short	15-30
Cucumber	early May	late May with protection	late May	15-30
Squash, pumpkin, zucchini	late April	late May with protection	season too short for larger varieties	15-30
Corn	early May	early June	mid-May	15-35
Beans	1st week May	1st week June	late May	15-30

Hardening Off Your Plants

All plants (even the ones purchased from a garden centre), need to be acclimatized to the bright light, wind and temperature fluctuations outside. Plants need to be hardened **for about 8-10 days** before they are planted outside.

- Indoors, creating “wind” using a fan or by fanning with a wad of newspapers (great for kids) is also good, as the movement strengthens the plant stems.
- Place the plants in a sheltered, partially shaded area (for example on the east side of your house) for 2-3 hours the first day, then increase the time a couple of hours each day.
- If you need to place them in a full sun location, they can only be out for 1 hour the first couple of days, then gradually increase the time each day.
- You can also place them in a box covered with row cover, a white fabric available at garden centres. Gradually remove the fabric and extend the amount of time the plants spend in direct light outside.
- Reduce watering somewhat, but don't let the plants wilt. At this point, do not fertilize them.

Cold Lovers: Take the plants in at night if the temperature is predicted to fall below 4 C°.

Heat Lovers: Take the plants in at night if the temperature is predicted to fall below 10 C°.

After this adjustment period and if there is no risk of frost, transplant the plants in the garden and fertilize them only with half strength solution of organic, liquid fertilizer for the first time. In a couple of weeks you can give them the recommended strength.