



GICD COMMUNITY GARDENING EDUCATION

Planting and Tending Your Garden in the Summertime

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The hard facts (and some solutions):

1. It's too hot and humid to go outside

- try early morning or late evenings
- daytime gardeners should use sunscreen, wear a hat, and drink lots of water

2. The soil is hot and dry

- use frequent waterings (twice per day) with soaker hose or small sprinkler
- add compost to soil and use a deep mulch
- cover newly planted beds with burlap, other fabric, bamboo shades, boards, or dried grass to shade, cool, and hold moisture in seed beds

3. First frost is on average, November 20th, plus or minus 2 weeks, so from August 20th, we have **about 13 weeks, or 91 days until frost.**

- all tender crops will die at first frost
some examples: tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, basil, squash, beans, sweet potato
- well established cold hardy crops will continue to thrive, especially if covered on freezing nights
some examples: mustards, Swiss chard, collard, turnip, beets, lettuce, garlic, leeks

Strategies for gardening in the hottest part of summer, and continuing on through the onset of colder weather:

Strategy 1. Plant winter hardy crops a few weeks before first frost (may need covering in cold weather). These can be planted from late August until mid October, and must be well established before first frost to be hardy.

crop and number of days until first harvest suggested varieties:

beets (fall greens, winter roots) 60	Detroit red, Lutz
broccoli (seed now, or transplant late) 65	Green Goliath, Packman, Premium Crop

carrot 75	Danvers Half Long, Nantes, Chantenay, White Icicle
Chinese cabbage 35-60	Gai Lon, Pak Choy, Choy Sum, Napa
collards 80	Vates or Georgia
garlic (plant in Oct)	buy cloves in local stores, matures Apr-May
leeks (plant seed now?, transplants Nov)	
lettuce (plant early Oct) 35	all leaf lettuces
mustard greens (all kinds) 35-50	S. Giant Curled, Florida, Tendergreens
radish (plant in Oct) 22-29	Red Sparkler, Crimson Giant, Cherry Belle
spinach (plant late Sept) 44	Bloomsdale
Swiss chard 60	Fordhook Giant, Rhubarb, Bright Lights
turnip (fall greens, winter roots) 50	7-top

Strategy 2. Plant quick growing summer crops as soon as possible. Because of summer heat and dryness these need daily watering, mulches, and maybe shading during first growth stages.

any of the faster crops from the winter hardy list above	
amaranth (for greens)	Tampala, Green
beans, bush 50	Contender, Tendercrop, Romano, Wax, Bluelake Bush
beans, pole 55-60	Romano Pole, Kentucky Wonder
eggplant (from transplants) 60-75	small hot chilies are best for late season
lima beans, bush 65-75	Fordhook, Henderson, Jackson Wonder
lima beans, pole 85-90	Christmas, King of the Garden, Florida Speckled
okra 55-65	Clemson, Zebest
peppers (from transplants) 70-80	most varieties
southern peas	Blackeye, Crowers, Cream, Purplehull
squash, summer 50-60	all kinds, zucchini, yellow, Kuta
squash, winter 75-85	Acorn, Butternut, Spaghetti, Asian pumpkin
sweet potato for greens	use cuttings from any good variety
tomatoes (from transplants)	Celebrity, cherry, Boy and Girl types, others

Strategy 3. Build soil and suppress weeds with deep mulch or cover crops so that plots will be fertile and easier to manage next year. A combination strategy is best, where some areas are planted to crops, some in cover crops, and some mulched. No area of you garden should be untended!

Edible cover crops:

southern peas	planted thickly, Blackeyes are best
sweet potato	thick growth, too late for tubers, but vine tips are edible

Non-food cover crops (usually planted later, but late summer is good):

- Austrian winter pea (actually the vine tips can be eaten)
- buckwheat
- oats
- Elbon rye
- winter wheat

Mulches in very weedy areas:

Use two-layer mulch:

Layer 1. newspaper and/or brown cardboard applied to block weeds
trim weeds close to ground, lay several sheets of newspaper (wet first)

Layer 2. cover paper deeply (6 inches) with other mulch:

woodchips* (in pathways),
chopped garden trimmings
leaves
grass trimmings
hay

Mulches on non-weedy areas:

Cover soil, ideally 6-8 inches with any organic mulch

chopped leaves
garden trimmings
woodchips (pathways only)
lawn grass clippings
hay

* Woodchips break down slowly, so they work well in pathways, but can be bothersome in crop areas.