

Starting A Vegetable Garden with Easy and Productive Plants



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	When to Plant	Special Care and Growing Advice
bush beans	Outdoors: when soil is warm after spring frosts	Needs warm soil to germinate. Don't add compost to your bean plot this year.
pole beans	Outdoors by mid-June	Second crop to follow bush beans. Don't add compost to your bean plot this year.
lettuce	Outdoors: early May and every 2-3 weeks after	Succession planting is best to work around mature plants bolting to seed. Add compost to soil before planting.
tomatoes	Indoors: mid-April; Outdoors: after spring frosts	May need staking. Determinate plants are smaller than indeterminate varieties. Look for disease-resistant plants, and relocate tomatoes to a different spot next year.
summer squash	Indoors: early May; Outdoors: after spring frosts	Needs lots of room. Add compost to soil before planting. May need to control cucumber beetles and/or squash bugs. For advice, see http://www.omafr.gov.on.ca/english/crops/organic/orgpests.htm .
beets	Outdoors: early May and again in mid-June	Thin them out early for edible greens. 2 crops – baby spring beets and larger fall beets. If young leaves are pale green, top-dress with compost.
radishes	Outdoors: early May and every 2-3 weeks after	Quick to mature (and over-mature): succession planting gives you a steady supply. Don't add compost to your radish plots this year. Flea beetles may chew holes in the leaves – see above link for advice on controlling them.
chard	Indoors: early April; Outdoors: mid-May	Thin when plants are small, and eat your thinnings. Top-dress with compost when plants are about 8 inches tall. If plant starts bolting to seed, cut out the central (bolting) stem and eat the leaves.
basil	Indoors: mid-April; Outdoors: when soil is warm after spring frosts	Basil is easy to grow in warm soil, but is extremely frost-sensitive. You may wish to grow basil in large pots with plenty of compost, and keep it indoors in spring and early fall to avoid chilly nights.
dill	Outdoors: early May	Thin the young plants for fresh dill weed, and leave a few plants to mature if you wish to collect dill seed. Flowering dill attracts beneficial insects to your garden. Enthusiastically self-seeds.

cilantro (coriander)	Outdoors: early May	Thin the young plants for fresh cilantro, and leave a few plants to mature if you wish to collect coriander seed. Flowering coriander attracts beneficial insects to your garden. Freely self-seeds.
parsley	Indoors: early March; Outdoors: after spring frosts	Be patient when starting from seed indoors – parsley seeds take a while to germinate. Don't plant outdoors too early, as chilly spring nights will cause parsley (a biennial) to bolt to seed during the summer months.
chives	Indoors: mid-March to early April; Outdoors: early May.	Chives are a hardy perennial and a favourite of northern gardeners. The blossoms are edible, and beautiful in salads. Chives propagate both by seed and by bunching side-by-side, so your clumps of chives will require thinning every couple of years. Freely self-seeds.
Welsh onions	Indoors: mid-March to early April; Outdoors: early May.	Another hardy perennial bunching onion, sort of like “chives on steroids.” Easier to thin than chives because of its larger size – i.e., you can just pry the extra onions out of the ground without digging up the whole clump. Freely self-seeds.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

- (1) “Indoors” means that you can start these plants indoors under grow lights for transplanting into the garden.
- (2) Except where noted, most of the plants in this list do not attract harmful insects.
- (3) I have not included any cruciferous plants (e.g., cabbage, kale, broccoli, collards) because they typically attract significant numbers of insect predators. I recommend that you begin your first-year garden without these plants, and then carefully introduce an easy variety to grow (e.g., kale or collards) if you'd like to learn some more natural pest control techniques.

– Author: Pat Lucey - March, 2021