

Cool Weather Garden Vegetables

There is a small time window in which to plant cool weather vegetables. This is the month to get early or cool weather vegetables planted in the home garden. The ideal time to plant crops is when the outdoor temperature is 60-65° F during the day and the ground temperature is 40° F or above. These early vegetables need to be harvested before temperatures reach 85° F. The Tulsa area is in the USDA Cold Hardiness 7a planting zone but, as we all know, the Tulsa area weather fluctuates, so part of planting is guesswork. OSU's Oklahoma Garden Planning Guide ([HLA-6004](#)) is based on past averages and is the best guide for our area. Be sure to have your soil tested first to ensure it contains the proper nutrients (the Tulsa OSU Extension Service does this – the procedure can be found on our website). Once tested and amended with the proper fertilizer and/or nutrients, you are ready to go.

The following plants and seeds should be in the garden now, as per the OSU planning guide:

- Leaf lettuce, head lettuce, spinach, carrots, beets, chard, peas, radish and greens including turnips, mustard and collards. All of these are to be planted as transplants (seedlings) or seeds directly in the garden.
- Plant onions sets now.
- Plant radish seeds for the fastest early vegetable crop – about 25 days to harvest. Champion is an OSU recommended variety for the Tulsa area.
- St. Patrick's Day is the time to plant potatoes, either red or white. OSU recommended varieties include: Norland, Red LaSoda, Red Pontiac, and Irish Cobbler. Buy potatoes at a garden store, not at a grocery store. Grocery store potatoes have been treated not to sprout. Cut potatoes in quarters with an eye on each piece. Dry the cut pieces indoors for 2-3 days and plant with the cut side down. Hill up the stems with soil when the potatoes start sprouting. Expect 90 to 120 days for potatoes to be ready to dig.

- Early spring is the time to plant Cole crops, sometimes called Brassica plants, and may also be listed as part of the mustard family. These Cole crops include cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower and are usually planted as plants, not seeds. They have been proven to grow well in Northeastern Oklahoma; however, only buy hybrid Cole crop plants or seeds. Plant these now as they take up to 90 days to harvest. The easiest Cole plant to grow is cabbage. Test for size and firmness before picking. Broccoli produces a large inner stalk so cut this stalk before it flowers. Then, all of the little side sprouts will produce stalks. It is the longest producing Cole crop, producing for about 6 weeks. Cauliflower produces a white curd which will yellow by the sun if not covered by leaves. Wrap leaves and tie around the curds to prevent yellowing. All Cole crops can be damaged by cabbage moths so it may be wise to treat such with an insecticide early in their growth.
- Carrots grow well in an early spring garden. Plant carrots now by seed. An OSU selected variety is Bolero Nantes. Carrots will not grow well in clay soil so amend by adding sand and humus. Sandy soil will produce long carrots that do not sprout legs. Thin the plantings when they are about 1" high.
- The easiest garden plant of all is lettuce and one of the earliest to harvest. It is often used in a kitchen garden. There are many varieties that do well in Oklahoma. Romaine, bibb, and leaf lettuce can be planted in containers and in any available garden spot. Kale is kin to lettuce and does well planted in the same garden spot. Gardeners should plant lettuce now so it will not wilt or bolt when the temperatures warm up.
- Spinach is also kin to lettuce. The crops grow well together and, of the two, spinach is the more nutritious vegetable. Plant spinach seeds now and the crop can be ready by mid-May. Plant early as spinach withstands cold weather well. OSU recommended spinach varieties for the Tulsa area are Ambassador, America, Bloomsdale, and Chesapeake.
- Parsley is an easy herb to grow in a kitchen garden along with lettuce and spinach. This herb also withstands cooler early spring temperatures.
- Snow peas and English peas are easy to transplant from indoor seedlings. Snow peas also withstand cold weather well. Plant outside now close to a

trellis. They climb and produce well. OSU recommended varieties are Little Marvel, Knight and Snappy. They can be ready in 60 days.

- Strawberries are the most popular and easily grown fruit in Oklahoma home gardens. Strawberries need full sun. They have a natural resistance to insects and diseases. Pick blossoms off the first year and the plants will produce well after this. Fertilize and keep watered and weeded. Early strawberries should be ready by the first of June. These June bearing strawberries are the best to grow in Oklahoma.

When choosing your vegetable plants, look for and buy disease resistant seeds and plants when possible. Water plants early in the morning at a rate of about 1" per week. Fertilize on a regular basis. Pick vegetables early in the morning for a better taste and freshness. Keep plantings mulched to keep them cool and free of weeds.

OSU offers several informative facts sheets on growing early vegetables:

HLA-6004	Oklahoma Garden Planning Guide
HLA-6032	Vegetable Varieties for the Home Garden in Oklahoma
HLA-6005	Mulching Garden Soils
HLA-6027	Cole Crop Production
HLA-6017	Growing Broccoli, Cauliflower and Cabbage
HLA-6035	Commercial Vegetable Varieties for Oklahoma

For more information, call the Tulsa OSU Extension Service at 918-746-3701 and a trained Tulsa Master Gardener will be glad to answer your questions.