

Vegetable Garden Series, Part 3: Planting Your Vegetable Garden

Welcome to the third installment of our four-part vegetable gardening series. If you're just now joining us, click [here](#) to access the archives for the last two articles on the Tulsa Master Gardeners [website](#).

Last month we covered the building phase of a new vegetable garden, including in-ground, forms of raised bed and container layouts, as well as soil types and preparation for the new garden.

To recap, the following homework tasks were assigned (did you do them all?):

- ✓ Read about and decide on your garden format
- ✓ Sketch the final draft of your garden plan
- ✓ List and obtain your materials (media, building materials, etc.)



And for whichever garden format you chose:

- ✓ Break ground and prepare the soil for your in-ground garden
- ✓ Build the raised bed(s) and fill with soil
- ✓ Assemble containers and fill with media

Assuming these are complete for your project garden, and you have a final draft of your garden plan and your sourced plants and seeds, it's PLANTING TIME! Wait. Not just yet...let's first circle back and review the importance of temperature and timing to the success of your planting.



Temperature and Timing

As discussed in Part 1, temperature and timing are two critical factors to maximize production. Frost tolerance will dictate when seeds or plants may be safely placed in the ground, or when mature plants are in danger of frost kill. Timing involves not only when to plant, but when to replant a second crop, based on the time to harvest. Check "days to harvest" to ensure optimum conditions through maturity. See how planting and harvest timing work together?

Cool season vegetables can be planted when the seed soil depth is at 40°F, while warm season vegetables require 50°F. Here's a quick review of frost classifications:

- ✓ **Very tender:** Cool weather injury
- ✓ **Tender:** Cool weather tolerant, light frost injury
- ✓ **Semi-hardy:** Cool weather tolerant, light frost tolerant, hard frost injury
- ✓ **Hardy:** Cold weather and hard frost tolerant

As we are now in April, the next couple weeks may be a bit tricky for tender and very tender vegetables, as there still exists a risk of frost. [The Mesonet](#) is a great tool for tracking all manner of weather and climate data, including soil and air temperature and rainfall.

Consult this and other tools before planting to get those seeds and seedlings off to a good start!

Reference [this OSU Fact Sheet chart](#) for your chosen vegetables' estimated planting times: Table 1A for cool season, Table 1B for warm season.



Making Arrangements

When you're really ready to plant, try these tips for arranging or grouping plants in your garden:

- 🕒 **Height:** Place tall plants on the north side to keep them from shading shorter plants.
- 🕒 **Cultural practice:** Put together plants with the same frost tolerance and care requirements - fertilization, weeding and watering.
- 🕒 **Life Cycle:** Allocate a section at the side or end of the garden for perennial vegetables (e.g. asparagus, rhubarb) to allow them to grow undisturbed.
- 🕒 **Maturity:** Group by maturity time to ease harvesting and replanting process.
- 🕒 **Companion Planting:** Group symbiotic plants to improve vigor, pollination, and pest control.

More on Companion Planting

Companion planting is a fascinating topic; one great example is the "Three Sisters" concept. Planted all three together, sweet corn, squash and beans make a supportive trio. Beans (fix) replenish the nitrogen corn depletes from the soil, corn provides support for the vines of both beans and squash...and the leaf density of the three planted together prevents weed growth. Try some of these companion planting ideas from [this publication](#) from Cornell University.

Other Tips and Requirements

Ready to plant? Consider these final tips and mistakes to avoid:

- ✓ Allow the proper space between plantings to prevent disease and allow ample work/walk space
- ✓ Avoid working the soil or walking in the garden when soil is wet
- ✓ Keep a watchful eye for pests and disease
- ✓ Thin plants when small, and weed often to avoid disturbing growing roots
- ✓ Mulch for moisture conservation and weed control

Until Next Time...

Until next month's installment, there is much to do, so start with these:

- ✓ Confirm the frost tolerance of your plantings
- ✓ Consult Mesonet for local temperature averages and frost dates
- ✓ Finalize the arrangement - grouping, companions and space requirements before planting

And when the temperature and timing is right:

- ✓ Plant, mulch and water in your plantings
- ✓ Document your journal

Do your homework...and come back for **Part 4: Maintaining Your Vegetable Garden!**

Resources

Fact Sheets and Resources for Part 3: Planting Your Vegetable Garden

[Cornell University: Companion Planting](#)
[HLA-6004: Oklahoma Garden Planning Guide](#)

Fact Sheets and Resources for Part 2: Building Your Vegetable Garden

[Tulsa Master Gardeners: Types of Gardens](#)
[HLA-6033: Raised Bed Gardening](#)
[HLA-6458: Container Gardening](#)
[PSS-2264: Straw Bale Bed: A Way to Garden While Building Soil](#)
[HLA-6436: Healthy Garden Soils](#)
[Texas A&M: Soil Preparation](#)
[Oklahoma Gardening: Container Gardening With Vegetables](#)
[University of Illinois Extension: Successful Container Gardens](#)
[HLA-6036: Soil Test Interpretations for Vegetable Crops](#)

Fact Sheets and Resources for Part 1: Planning Your Vegetable Garden

[HLA-6440: Homeowner Garden Design Series - Planning the Landscape](#)
[HLA-6004: Oklahoma Garden Planning Guide](#)
[Texas A&M: Planning a Garden](#)
[Vegetable Varieties for the Home Garden in Oklahoma](#)