

What to Plant Now: Veggies to Grow and Harvest Before the End of the School Year

By Vince Lazaneo

Winter crops are being harvested; warm weather may have you considering which spring crops you should plant. But in a school garden the race is on to get vegetables planted in spring in time for some kind of harvest before schools let out for summer. Most schools are still in session in June, so edibles that can be harvested in 60-90 days are valuable.

Here are some ideas to consider, particularly if you can get them planted in March.

- Beans - Bush beans can usually be harvested before pole beans, but they need warm soil to sprout. If the soil is cool, cover it with some clear plastic or with floating row cover material until the seeds emerge. If you use plastic remove it when the seedlings appear.
- Summer squash/zucchini need warm soil and air temps to grow well. Seeds may take too long but transplants will probably work.
- Radishes can be harvested in four to eight weeks depending on variety.
- Japanese turnips are also quick and sweet/crunchy. Other root crops take much longer.
- Lettuce works well, especially from transplants. In the spring, protect lettuces from warm weather by planting in a shadier location, maybe behind a taller plant to avoid your lettuce bolting due to the heat.
- Kohlrabi or peas may work if you use transplants.
- Sunflowers grow tall pretty fast.
- Small potatoes could be produced if you plant right away.
- Strawberries may produce some fruit before school is out.

To encourage healthy plant growth, add compost to your soil when you plant your spring crop to provide additional nutrients. Fish emulsion is a quicker-acting fertilizer if you need to encourage your crops to produce for your students.

Happy gardening!