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Planting and Harvesting Calendar for Gardeners in Yuma County

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Yuma is known as the Winter Salad Bowl of the nation, producing over 90% of the winter leafy greens and vegetables consumed in the United States. Between the months of November and March, Yuma is the epicenter of US production of salad greens. This is great news for home gardeners! When gardeners in northern climates begin storing their gardening tools for the winter gardeners in Yuma are just getting started.

There are two distinct growing seasons in Yuma. The first growing season extends from September through February, when the sun is low and the days are short, and is ideal for growing cool season crops. The second growing season extends from March through August, when the sun is higher in the sky and days are longer, and is ideal for growing warm season crops. The cool season is best for growing non-fruiting plants such as lettuce, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage. These crops thrive in cool weather and can survive the occasional light frost that occurs in Yuma. The warm season is the best time to grow fruiting crops such as tomatoes, squash, melons, and peppers, which can handle the warmer spring temperatures.

In addition to plant selection and timing of planting, successful gardening in Yuma also requires planning and preparation to effectively manage soil pH, salinity, and pests. Yuma soil can be a challenge for gardeners due to its alkalinity and salinity. In most parts of the United States, soil acidity is common and amending garden beds with lime to raise pH is routine. For this reason, new residents moving to Yuma from northern regions might instinctively want to apply lime when preparing garden beds. However, Yuma's soil is naturally very high in pH and typically has pH values of 8 or 9. Since most plants absorb the optimal amount of nutrients and grow best in soils at pH 7, adding lime to the soil is normally not advisable. Soil tests should be used to determine your soil's pH before any soil amendments are added.

If soil pH is found to be high, this can be remedied by amending the soil with sulfur. Application of granular sulfur compounds lowers soil pH, as it produces sulfuric acid in the presence of water, which then acidifies the soil. If ammonium sulfate is used not only will soil pH be reduced but nitrogen levels will be increased as well.

Another challenge for Yuma gardens is high soil salinity. The water we use to irrigate our gardens can be saline. When irrigation water evaporates or is taken up by plants it leaves salts behind. Accumulations of salts in the soil can lead to plant decline and even death. Drip irrigation systems cause the greatest accumulation of salts because the small amount of water supplied during each irrigation event concentrates salts in the soil where plant roots grow. For this reason, the best way to reduce this build up is to wash the salts out of the root zone by adding calcium from gypsum followed by a long slow soaking with water. Calcium salts needed for good soil structure will displace harmful sodium in the soil and the water will wash the sodium down below the root zone.

Finally, as with all gardens, pests are an issue here in Yuma as well. Mild winters and hot summers create an ideal climate for survival of many insect, disease, and weed species. Out of all the pests, insects are probably the easiest to manage because there are many options for control, both organic and conventional. Diseases and weeds are a different story. The best way to combat diseases and weeds is prevention. Select plants that are resistant to diseases and practice good garden sanitation by removing dead or dying material before the sickness spreads. Apply preventative fungicide treatments during those occasional wet conditions we see in the desert from rain or heavy fog to prevent mildews from spreading, and be on the watch for virus vectors like whitefly or alternate viral host plants. Verticillium and fusarium wilt can be a problem in Yuma, especially for crops such as lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, and chiles and can really only be remedied with crop rotation.

Weeds, can be prevented with good mulching practices or weed cloth that prevents them from establishing. Preemergent herbicides exist, but not all of them are safe for food production. Always read and follow pesticide instructions and remember "the label is the law". Applying pesticides improperly isn't only not advisable, it is illegal. Please contact the Yuma County Cooperative Extension office for more pest control information.

How to use this Calendar

The calendar below is intended to guide Yuma gardeners in plant selection, timing, and cultivation. To use this calendar find the crop you want to grow in the first column, which is in alphabetical order. The columns to the right will tell you what you need to know about when to plant and harvest, seed depth, row width, and spacing between plants. In the column labeled planting depth, some of the crops have two numbers, for example 1 to 2 inches; planting depth depends on soil texture, in heavy soils go with the smaller number, in lighter soils, go with the bigger number. This calendar has been made for seeds unless otherwise noted, but transplants can also be planted during these times as well. The calendar suggests planting in September for some cool season crops. For most gardeners we suggest waiting until October when the weather cools down. Gardeners who provide shade and enough irrigation can start in September, but it will take extra care to keep germinating plants alive during the extremely warm days

References

Ten Steps to a Successful Vegetable Garden https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1435-2015.pdf

Vegetable Planting Calendar for Maricopa County https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1005-2018.pdf

Herbs

Crop (seeded unless noted)	Planting Window	Harvest Window	Planting Depth (in)	Row Width (in)	Plant Spacing (in)
Basil	Year round	Year round	1/2	30	4
Cilantro	September-December	January-April	1/4	30	1-2
Dill	October-February	February-March	1/2	30	6
Oregano	October-February	December-April	1	30	4
Parsley	September-January	December-March	1/8	30	6
Sage	November-December	March-April	1/2	30	6
Savory	November-December	March-April	1/2	30	6
Sorrel	November-December	March-April	1/2	30	6
Spearmint	November-December	March-April	1/2	30	6
Tarragon	November-December	March-April	1/2	30	6
Thyme	November-December	March-April	1/2	30	6

Veggies

Crop (seeded unless noted)	Planting Window	Harvest Window	Planting Depth (in)	Row Width (in)	Plant Spacing (in)
Asparagus	October-February	March-April	8	4 to 6	20 to 24
Artichoke	September-October	May-June	1 to 2	32 to 40	24
Beans (Dry)	March-April	June	1	30	6
Beans (Green)	March-April	May-June	1/2 to 1	30	3-4
Beets	October-February	December-April	1	30	4
Bok Choy	September-January	January-April	1/4	30	10
Broccoflower and Broccolini	September-January	January-April	1/4	36	6
Broccoli	September-December	December-April	1/2	36	10 to 12
Brussel Sprouts	September-December	January-March	1/4 to 1/2	36	18 to 20
Cabbage	September-January	December-March	1/8	30	10 to 12
Carrot	September-December	January-April	1/8	20	1-2
Cauliflower	September-December	December-April	3	36	10 to 12
Celery (transplant)	September	February-March	3	30	10
Chard	September-January	December-March	1/8	30	10 to 12
Corn	February-March	May-June	2	30 to 40	10
Cucumber	September & Feb.-Mar.	Nov. & May-July	1	5 to 6	6 to 10
Eggplant	February-March	April-June	1/2	30 to 40	10
Fennel	September-November	January-April	1	36	8
Garlic	March-May	September-November	1 to 2	12	3
Kale	September-December	December-April	1/4	30	6 to 10
Leek (transplants)	September-November	February-March	3	30	6
Lettuce (Baby Leaf)	October-February	October-March	1/8	12 to 14	1/2
Lettuce (Romaine, Head, Leaf)	September-January	December-March	1/8	18	10 to 12
Melons (Cantaloupe, Honeydew, Watermelon)	February-March	May-June	1 to 2	8	6 to 10
Okra	February-March	May-June	1	30 to 40	12 to 18
Onion (Bulb)	September	April	1/2	30	4
Onion (Green)	September-November	January-April	1/4	30	1
Peas	November-December	February-March	1	15 to 18	4
Peas (Black Eyed Peas)	April-May	July-August	2	30	4
Peanuts	March-April	October-November	1 to 2	40	8-10
Peppers/Chiles	September & Feb.-Mar.	Nov. & May-July	1/2	36	6 to 10
Potatoes	November-December	April-May	6	30 to 40	12
Radish	September-February	November-April	1/2	30	1
Spinach	September-February	November-April	1/8	20	3
Squash (Summer and Winter)	February-March	May-June	1	40 to 48	12
Tomato	February-March	May-July	1/4	5	10 to 12
Turnip Greens	October-February	January-April	1/4	30	6

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