



Vegetable Crops “A to Z”

The Verde Valley has one of the best climates in the state for growing summer vegetable crops. Your garden area should be in full sun. However, you can be successful in areas that get 6 hours of direct sun or more. Amend the soil with copious quantities of organic matter (up to 4”), phosphorus fertilizer, and soil sulfur if you are in a limestone area. Till these in to a depth of 8 to 12”, rake smooth, irrigate, allow to settle and dry out for a few days, then plant seed or seedlings of the summer vegetable crops you really like. Remember to irrigate and periodically apply nitrogen fertilizer.

Artichokes

Cool weather perennial thistle plants; can remain productive for 4 to 7 years. Prefer full sun and deep, fertile, well-drained soil high in organic matter. After amending soil with compost apply phosphorus fertilizer 8 to 10 inches deep; need consistent moisture. Plant crowns in late spring; harvest before buds open. ‘Imperial Star’ is good for our area.

Asparagus

Best planted from seed, the University of California varieties (i.e. UC 157) are best adapted to our alkaline soils. Plant in bottom of one-foot deep hole and backfill as they grow through the first growing season. First year - no harvest, provide lots of nitrogen to promote growth; second year harvest spears when they are the diameter of your thumb and stop harvesting when they reach the size of a pencil. After harvest is done, fertilize and allow the remaining spears to grow for the remainder of the growing season. Cut down and remove after frost has killed tops

Beans

Best grown from seed. Pole beans produce best and have the best flavor; plant 6 inches apart. ‘Kentucky Wonder’ is a tried and true variety. Bush beans are less work because they do not require trellising, but are often inferior in flavor and production. ‘Contender’ is one of the best varieties of bush beans.

Beets

Seeds are in capsules, soak prior to planting. There are a lot of varieties. Thin plants to every 8 inches for maximum size.

Broccoli / Cauliflower

Require lots of sun and space; light sensitive and will lean. Many good varieties, yellow cauliflower is best. Use floating cover to protect from aphids and cabbage loopers.

Brussels Sprouts

Plant seeds and pull leaves off as it grows to form best sprouts. Interesting plant to grow.

Cabbage

Grow varieties not found in stores; needs lots of space.

Carrots

Sow seed in a large bed or wide rows, or broadcast a mixture of varieties. Thin plants to 2 to 4 inches apart. Water stress causes splitting. Can hold in the ground in fall/winter. Many varieties available. You can also mix radish seed into the carrot seed mix. By the time radishes are finished, the carrots should be coming on.

Chard

Plant a mix. Resists bolting better than some other greens (red especially).

Corn

Sweet corn is easy to grow but requires periodic nitrogen fertilization during the growing season. Plant in 3 to 4 row block to ensure adequate pollination; space 1 foot apart. Many varieties available. Super sweet varieties require isolation (at least 500 feet is recommended) from standard varieties to maintain quality. Plant only one variety in small garden spaces. Corn borer and earworms are common pests.

Cucumbers

Best planted from seed and use less garden space if trellised or grown on a fence. All varieties are worth growing. Japanese climbing varieties are superior in flavor. Keep them well irrigated as stress can make the skin bitter. Picklers have black spines, slicers have white spines.

Dill

Dill will cross with fennel. Only need to plant once and it will continue to come up, forever.

Eggplant

Very heat tolerant. Large, European varieties (i.e. Black Beauty) can have bitter skin. These should only be harvested when black and glossy. Japanese varieties (i.e. Ichiban) do not get bitter skin. Small, white-fruited varieties lack flavor and are grown for ornamental purposes.

Endive

Store-bought is blanched, requires labor; nice to grow.

Garlic

Many varieties. For hardneck varieties try Music, Continental, Spanish Roja, Carpathian, Georgian Fire, or German Red. These all produce large, easy to peel cloves and tend to be on the hot and spicy side. Some good softneck varieties are Inchelium Red, California Early, Western Rose, Mild French, and Silver White. These are milder, produce smaller cloves, and are most desirable for braiding. Plant in Fall (Sept); sulfur not recommended, makes garlic hotter. Harvest in June.

Green Beans

Pole beans are more work than bush beans, but they taste much better. "Kentucky Wonder" is a good variety. If you must plant bush beans, "Contender" is good. Plant bean seed only after soils reach 70 degrees F .

Horseradish

Can be grown here - severe irritant.

Kale

Performs best in fertile, well-drained soil rich in organic matter. Grow from seed or transplants. May be planted 2 to 3 weeks before the last frost-free date. Seeds should be planted $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch deep and thinned when plants have 3 to 4 true leaves. Side-dress with nitrogen after 4 weeks. Water deeply and infrequently to maintain even soil moisture; moisture fluctuation may cause leaves to become tough and develop off flavors. Fall plantings will grow and produce through the winter months. Being a biennial, it does not flower in the first year.

Lettuce

Leaf lettuce is easy to grow. There are some heat tolerant varieties. Head lettuce uses a lot of phosphorus. Sow seeds shallow as they are very small. Bolting is related to day length.

Melons

Varieties are numerous, so plant varieties that are not readily available in stores. They need lots of space. Roll the vines - done by picking up the vine and placing it back down across the crown of the plant after 2 to 4 golf-ball sized melons have been set on that vine. We are not sure how it works, but farmers have done it for years.

Okra

Best grown from fresh seed. Recommended varieties: ‘Lee’, ‘Emerald’, and ‘Clemson Spineless’ (all reach heights of 5 to 6 feet). Dwarf variety ‘Dwarf Green Long Pod’ reaches a mature height of 3 feet. ‘Annie Oakley’ is a compact plant with extra tender pods.

Onions

Plant sets if available, use short day (day neutral) onions to produce bulbs. Sweet Grano (1033Y) and Granex (1015Y) are good sweet varieties. Avoid sulfur because it makes them hot.

Peanuts

Three classes: Virginia, Valencia and Spanish. Grow Virginia. Plant raw nut with integument intact. Flowers bloom, pollinate, then it forms a peg that grows into the soil where the peanut forms. Harvest after freeze and air dry. Everyone needs to plant them at least once.

Peas

Best to grow edible pod varieties; use appropriate Rhizobium inoculum for peas.

Peppers/Chiles

Many varieties are well suited to our area. Peppers have superior ovaries and chiles have inferior ovaries (referring to whether or not the petals are attached above (superior) or below (inferior) the ovary. Sulfur improves production in alkaline soils. Anaheim types (Sandia, Big Jim) are roasted for green chile. Three or four jalapeño plants will produce enough to make lots of salsa. Bell peppers need to have enough foliage to shade fruit thereby preventing sunburn. You can get a jump on the growing season by planting them from nursery 4 or 6 packs.

Potatoes (Irish)

Buy certified seed potatoes to minimize disease; many varieties available, so grow the unusual ones. Plant in early spring. Plant deep and backfill as they grow to maximize the amount of buried stem. If harvested during the bloom, you get new potatoes. Otherwise, dig mature potatoes after vines die back in August or September.

Pumpkins

Need lots of space. If you have children, large field varieties are fun to grow for jack-o-lanterns. Pie and white varieties are sweeter and tastier for baking.

Rhubarb

Perennial; prefers fertile, well-drained soil high in organic matter. Avoid excessive heat and wind. Plant cuttings taken from healthy crowns (should have at least 1 leaf bud on top and healthy roots). Do not harvest for first 2 years. In the 3rd year, stalks can be harvested for 3 to 4 weeks. After the 4th year, harvest stalks for 6 to 10 weeks or until plants begin to lose vigor. Stalks are ready for harvest when the petiole is 10 to 15 inches in length. To remove, grasp the stalk just below the leaf and pull upwards and to one side breaking it off rather than cutting it. This reduces the potential for disease. Only the stalks are edible, so all leaves should be removed and discarded or composted. Leave 1/3 of stalks at any given time to maintain plant health.

Spinach

Cool season crop, prefers sunny locations and fertile, well-drained soil. Good for raised beds and small spaces. Tastes best when matures before summer heat. Seeds germinate readily after soil temperatures reach 40°F. Plant in rows 12” apart and thin plants to 3” within each row. Irrigation: 1 to 2 inches per week, depending on temperatures. Several perform well in northern Arizona. Smooth-leaf spinach has flat leaves and is often sold as bagged spinach at stores. Arrow-head has arrow-shaped leaves and is also called Asian-leaf. Savoyed-leaf spinach has recurved leaves with indented leaf veins. ‘Auroch’ is a smooth-leaf, F1 hybrid that is cold tolerant and suitable for harvest at both early and late growth stages.

Squash are easy to grow, come in many varieties, and are very prolific. Summer squash are harvested when the fruit is immature. They should be shiny and waxy to the touch. Winter squash are allowed to mature until the skin hardens and color develops. Mature winter squash can be stored for long periods.

Sweet potatoes

Grown from “slips” or stem cuttings. Once roots form, they can be planted in the garden after the danger of frost is over. Plant slips in rows 36 to 48 inches apart, spaced 12 inches apart within the row. Centennial is more tolerant of clay soils.

Tomatoes

Allowing to sprawl on ground will make more tomatoes but some will rot. Trellis will prevent rot but grows fewer fruits. Fruit set diminishes above 90 degrees F. Tomatoes self-pollinate so seed saving is easy on non-hybrid varieties. Blossom-set product works at low temperatures (55 to 85 degrees F). Bees “sonicate” (vibration of wings w/o flight) which releases pollen.

Watermelon - See Melons

Zucchini - See Squash

Additional Resources

[Yavapai County Vegetable Planting Dates](#)

Dates show are for seed planting in the ground, unless otherwise noted.

[Yavapai County Selecting Tomato Varieties](#)

[Yavapai County Tomato Planting, Growing, Harvesting](#)

[Yavapai County Challenges with Growing Tomatoes](#)

[Ten Steps to a Successful Vegetable Garden](#), University of Arizona

[“Sweet Potatoes the Garden”](#), Utah State University Cooperative Extension

February 11, 2024

Adapted from original Backyard Gardener publications by Jeff Schalau, Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, Yavapai County

The University of Arizona is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or genetic information in its programs and activities.