

Gardening Tips—Living Well Community

Prepare the Soils Well:

--Need nutrients, organic matter, minerals, air, moisture, and Sunlight

50% frost free date: April 15

99% frost free date: April 30

In 25 years at Sustenance Farm last frost has varied between April 14 and May 8.

In 25 years first frost has varied between October 9 and November 18.

We generally get good rain (44 inches per year), but any month could be a drought month, and rain can also come in large rain events rather than spread out over the month.

Plant at the Right Time:

(WQ sheet: move spring crops start date back 15 days, same end date)

--October: Garlic, cover crops, strawberries, winter onions, spinach?

--November: late garlic (Ok but not as good as October).

--December: trees and berries

--January: start cool season transplants inside or in greenhouse (need 7 weeks)

--February: Onion sets, carrots, pea shoots

--Late February: first planting of radish, peas, lettuce mix, arugula, mixed greens, etc.

--March: All the other cool season plants + cool season starts (broccoli, etc.)

--March 25—April 10: Potatoes

--Early April: last planting of cool season crops

--Late April: Start planting of warm season crops

Hint: For home garden production we get more production and more flexibility planting lettuce and greens from seed to eat at all stages as cut and come again crops rather than growing full plants. What we still like to grow as single plants for spring crops are broccoli, swiss chard, and sometimes cabbage. Everything else we grow as cut and come again.

3 Seasons in North Carolina:

--Spring Season

--Summer Season

--Fall Season

Pick the right varieties for our climate: e.g. For carrots on clay soils need to use “Nantes” varieties. For mid and late summer beans that can take the heat and keep producing need to use runner beans rather than bush beans. Bush beans are fine for early summer production and late summer (september) production, but not for producing in July and August. Some crops that are not one’s we are used to eating we will eat more of if have the right variety, e.g. turnips.

Season Extension: Can extend cool season crops into the summer and summer season crops into the cool season, and cool season fall crops into the winter with season extension methods. Can evaluate if the extra work and cost is worth the effort, but it can be done.

Food options expanded by eating more of the crop:

--One simple way to expand our food production without growing more crops is to eat more parts of the plants we are already growing. Different parts of the plant we can eat are the leaves, the stems, the flowers, the seeds, the seed pods, the roots, and the growing shoots. Some simple examples of additional parts of the plant that are edible are the following:

Peas: all parts of the plant, but especially the growing shoots and the flowers.

Beans: all parts of the plant, but especially the leaves.

Squash: the leaves

Sweet Potatoes: The growing tips

Corn: The stem (for sweetness)

Raddish: leaves

Cole crops: flowers

Arugula: flowers

chives: flowers

garlic: scapes, and green garlic (like green onions)

--Many of the weeds that grow in the garden and around the garden are also edible

--I am particularly interested in wild edibles, perennial edibles, self seeding edibles, and dividing edibles to decrease the amount of work needed to produce food.

--Sometimes being more self sufficient in food production means we need to change: change our diet to adapt to what grows best here, change to use new foods as more a part of our diet, change to eat more and/or different parts of the plant, change to notice what the land is already producing in abundance, change our eating patterns or what we cook (e.g. more stews and stir fries that can use a larger diversity of food stock depending what is in season) to make harvesting and use of fresh food an easier task.