

The Grower's Spade

Horticulture tools for your farm and garden



Yadkin County Center

2020

January-March 2020

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Happy New Year

Beat the Bulbs

Grow Cool-season Crops

When you think of a home vegetable garden, the staple crops like tomatoes, beans, and cucumbers come to mind. But early spring crops can be planted, harvested and turned under before these summer crops are a twinkle in the gardener's eye.



What's so "cool" about 'em?

In gardening, as in life, timing is everything. Planting time is determined by the cold hardiness and heat tolerance of a crop. Vegetables can be divided into two categories, cool-season and warm-season crops, based on their optimum growth temperatures. Cool-season crops tolerate frost and are typically planted mid-February to mid-April in our Piedmont region. Cold temperatures actually enhance the sweetness of leafy greens (kale, collards, turnips, etc.), whereas heat will cause them to flower and turn bitter.

Fun fact: cool-season crops originated in temperate climates and warm-season crops in tropical and subtropical climates. No wonder your watermelon that grew up

on the edge of the Sahara (West Africa) isn't happy in a cold snap.

Cool-season crops to try

Below are five cool-season crops to consider for an early spring garden. The list includes the best time to plant from seed (unless otherwise indicated) /days to harvest/ a tip or two on growing or eating.

- **Beet** (*Beta vulgaris*): Mar 1-April 15 / 55-60 days (greens 35 days) / Beet greens are just as delicious as the roots and packed with iron and vitamin A and K. Seedlings emerge in clusters, and must be thinned; thinnings can be eaten raw in salads.
- **Cabbage** (*Brassica oleracea*): Feb 15 - March 15/ 65-85 days (from transplant)/Cabbage and other cole crops such as kale, broccoli, and collards can be severely damaged by the "cabbageworm complex" - cabbage looper, diamondback moth larva, and imported cabbageworm. Home gardeners can use row covers to protect plants, scout and handpick larva. *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) insecticide sprays and predatory insects can also be effective controls.



Imported cabbageworm larva (*Pieris rapae*). Zachary Boone Snipes, ©2015, Clemson Extension

NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



- **Lettuce** (*Lactuca sativa*): Feb 15 - April 1 / 40-50 days / In and out quick, lettuce is a great first crop in succession planting. Follow lettuce with a summer crop, or stagger your plantings to extend harvest.
- **Peas** (*Pisum sativum*): Jan 1-April 1/ 54-72 days/ Peas are an excellent option for small space gardening as they can be grown to climb up a trellis. Pea plants shut down in hot weather about 85 F, so don't plant too late.
- **Swiss Chard** (*Beta vulgaris subsp. Vulgaris*): Mar 1-May 1 / 60-70 days / With their colorful stems, Swiss Chard can be an aesthetic addition to your flower beds. Harvest outer leaves for continuous production.

Some unusual crops to try in an early spring garden are asparagus, salad turnips, and kohlrabi.

March 1, Visit NC Farms App goes live in Yadkin County. Download the App and check us out at visitncfarmstoday.com/yadkin



Fall Vegetable Gardening

A “cool” thing about cool season crops is that if you miss the early spring (Feb-April) growing window, you can plant them in autumn. Plant mid-August to September for a fall crop. The challenge with fall gardening is getting heat sensitive crops established in the hot, dry months. Using shade cloth or starting transplants in a sheltered area or indoors is a way to get tender seedlings established. Many years, these crops will overwinter and can be harvested in early spring.

Hope these tips prepare you to put on those gardening gloves, and try your hand at cool-season crops.

Hort Happenings

Winter Small Fruit Series

January 28

Basics & Blackberries

Craig Mauney, Area Specialized Agent & Hannah Lepsch

[Yadkin Agricultural Building & Enon Meadows Farm](#)

February 4

Blueberries

*Bill Cline, NC State Blueberry Specialist
[Green Mesa Blueberry Farm](#)*

February 18

Muscadine grapes

*Mark Hoffman, NC State Grape Specialist
[Sanders Ridge Vineyard & Winery](#)*

Cost: \$5 per class or \$10 for the three class series.

Registration required.

Call **336-849-7908** to register at least 2 days prior to each event

March 3

Pest Safety private “V” Training & Exam-

Yadkin County Agricultural & Educational Building

March 12

Hemp Growers Meeting

Yadkin County Agricultural and Educational Building