



Redwood Barn Nursery

1607 Fifth Street Davis, California

The other summer vegetables.

Summer gardening isn't just about tomatoes! It's time to plant peppers, eggplant, and other heat lovers. All of these are best planted in May or early June.

Here's a quick review of some of these popular summer vegetables and fruits.

Beans

Best production is in the cooler ends of the seasons.

The "bush" types of green beans can be planted every few weeks for steady harvest. Pole beans yield more per square foot so long as you are consistent about picking them. If not, they stop producing. Avoid Kentucky Wonder variety, as it isn't heat tolerant.

Preferred varieties: Blue Lake, Tenderpod, Royal Burgundy.

Yardlong or asparagus beans are entirely different, subtropical plants that thrive on heat.

Peppers and eggplant

Bell and other sweet peppers, planted now, will yield heavily from August through October.

All sweet peppers will turn red as they ripen on the plant and get sweeter as they do so.

Preferred varieties: Gypsy, Jimmy Nardello, Italian Long Green, Yolo Wonder.

Hot peppers that we use fresh, such as jalapeño and habaño, may be picked green as early as June. Left to ripen, they will turn red and get sweeter, though still quite hot. Those we grow for drying, such as cayenne and Thai peppers, yield large quantities in late summer and into October and early November.

Some moderately hot peppers: Anaheim, Jalapeño, Fresno, Garden Salsa, Hatch.

Very hot peppers: Habaño, Cayenne, Thai.



Eggplants take longer than peppers to yield. The plants are bigger (3 feet tall and broad). The narrower and smaller fruited types yield more heavily and earlier.

Preferred varieties: Black Beauty, Rosa Bianca, Millionaire, Ichiban.

Peppers and eggplant benefit from light fertilizer applications during the growing season and should not be drought stressed.

Tomatillos and ground cherries

These are the key ingredient of salsa verde; ground cherries are their sweet cousins that are used for pies and sauces. They love warm soil, grow rapidly, and yield heavily late in the season.



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You need two plants as they don't pollinate themselves. A tomato cage keeps the plants more compact.

The cucumber family

Cucumbers, muskmelons, pumpkins, squash, and watermelons.

Rambunctious vines, some of which we grow on the ground, others up on fences or trellises.

Cucumbers start producing just a few weeks after planting. All the others take 2 to 3 months.

Preferred varieties of cucumbers:

I don't recommend the standard green ones, because they get bitter.



- Persian cucumbers are very productive and sweet flavored. Diva has become very popular, and for good reason.
- "Burpless" cucumbers have small seed cavities and very thin skin. They're very easy to grow and new hybrids are very productive.
- Lemon cukes are sweet, productive, and easy to grow, but don't yield as long through the summer as newer types.
- Armenian cucumbers are popular because they're very easy. They're a type of melon but are used like cukes. Very, very

vigorous vines, never bitter, but very mild flavored.

You can continue to plant cucumber seedlings through mid-summer. Avoid drought stress.

Melons

The muskmelon I would not be without is Ambrosia, a type of cantaloupe. The flavor is, well, ambrosial! Nothing compares with it. It is very soft-fleshed and ripens rapidly. Plant some honeydew melons with your muskmelons for longer harvest.

Watermelons require lots of room. Plant 2 to 3 plants together and give them a six-foot circle, for a yield of 2 to 3 fruit after 80 to 85 days.

Modern hybrids are sweeter with better texture. Crimson Sweet and Sangria are two of the best I've grown. For a compact grower, look for Sugar Baby.

Check the label for the 'days to harvest' and mark your calendar for that harvest date when you plant the seedling in the ground.

Watermelons look ripe a couple of weeks before they are.





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Pumpkins

... take a lot of space, growing twenty feet or more, but it can be fun to watch them run all around your back yard. I suggest pie types for more fruit in a small area.

Squash

There are lots of types of summer squash, and many yield better here than zucchini. I find Patty Pan, or gourmet varieties like Tromboncini, more satisfactory. Of the zucchinis, Gold Rush has the advantage of being visible down in the leaves (the yellow fruit stands out in the green foliage), so you can see to harvest them while they are still small. It is more tender than standard green zucchini.

Winter squash refers to the hard-skinned types we grow in summer and store for use in fall and winter.

Well-known types include Hubbard, acorn, butternut. Sweet Meat has large fruit and especially fine-textured flesh, great for baking and for pies. Give them room: they will run across your garden!

Sweet corn

Easy and fast but takes lots of room and plenty of water. Turn in lots of manure or some other source of nitrogen as corn is a heavy feeder. Plant corn in blocks, not rows, to allow the wind to scatter the pollen from the tassels to the silks. Plant a 4 x 4-foot block, with plants thinned to a foot apart, then do another planting a few weeks later.

Each plant produces one ear, maybe two, and the whole block matures simultaneously. Repeated plantings through mid-July can give you harvest all the way into early fall.

My favorite is Silver Queen, a tender white sweet corn. Extra-sweet types, which to my taste have more sugary than corny flavor, include Bodacious, Kandy Korn, and Honey & Cream.



Don't forget basil!

Our most popular summer herb thrives in heat and can be planted all summer long. There are lots of types! Try large-leaved Genovese basil for pesto, the new Emerald Tower types for longer harvest (they never flower!). Thai basil is very easy, blooms early, and attracts bees.

Unlike most garden herbs, basil is an annual: grow it in summer for fresh use and be sure to harvest some in fall to dry or freeze.

Plant in May for a bountiful summer!



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