

# Planting Guide for Home Gardening in Alabama

► Successful home gardening comes with careful planning and constant attention. Select the site carefully, plant at the correct time, use the right amount of fertilizer, use adapted varieties, and control pests.

**Site.** Select a site exposed to full sun. Too many gardeners try to grow vegetables in competition with trees, shade from buildings, or fences. The soil should be well drained and free of harmful chemicals, oil, ashes, mortar, etc.

**Soil Management.** You can improve your garden soil by adding organic matter—compost, leaf mold, or well-rotted sawdust. Work it into the soil in the late fall.

**Lime and Fertilizer.** A soil test is the best way to determine lime and fertilizer needs. Your county Extension office has information about soil tests. Testing at least every 3 years is a good idea. For most vegetables, the soil pH should be around 6.0 to 6.5. To be effective, the lime must be mixed into the soil before planting. Long-season crops such as tomatoes, cabbage, pepper, okra, and potatoes need more fertilizer than short-season crops. Experience and close observation are the best guides for additional side-dressing.

**Seed and Plants.** Seeds are cheap, so get the best available. Don't seed too thickly. Plant small seed, such as turnips and carrots, about 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep. Plant larger seed, such as beans, cucumbers, and peas, about 1 inch deep. Use only stocky, healthy, fresh plants. Always water transplants to settle the soil around roots. Set tall plants deeper in the ground than they grew originally.

**Weed Control.** To control weeds, use a mulch. Deep cultivation after plants are older will do more damage than good. Chemical weed killers are not usually recommended for home gardens. Before using a weed control product, get full information on how to use it and what crop it should be used on.

**Irrigation.** Water is essential for a top-notch garden. During long dry periods, soak the garden thoroughly once a week; don't just sprinkle daily. Light, frequent irrigation helps only during the period of seed germination. Overhead irrigation, especially late in the afternoon, is likely to spread certain foliage diseases. If you use overhead irrigation, do so earlier in the day so plants can dry before night.



**Disease Control.** The best practices in disease control are rotation, clean seed, resistant varieties (when available), early planting, plowing under old crop debris, mulching, and seed treatment. Chemical fungicides may be used to control some common leaf diseases of tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, and cantaloupes. If the garden is heavily infested with nematodes, either move the garden or heat the soil through a process called soil solarization.

**Insect Control.** For a successful garden, you must control insects. Early planting will miss some insects, but usually, you'll have to use insecticides. Use biosensitive insecticides as your first choice to treat for insect problems in the garden. Safer insecticidal soaps will help control aphids and other soft-bodied insects early on. Malathion is a good all-around material for aphids and red spider mites and gives some worm control. Carbaryl (Sevin) is another effective material, especially for bean beetles, tomato and corn earworms, cucumber beetles, and pickleworms. *Bacillus thuringiensis* or Bt (Dipel, Thuricide) is an excellent biological control for cabbage worm or cabbage looper.

**Use all chemicals—for insects, weeds, or nematodes—according to directions on the label.**

The label will tell you the amount to be used, the crops to use it on, and the number of days between application and harvest. The label is one of the most important pieces of garden literature available. Read and heed it for effective use and safety.

**Harvesting.** The main reason for a home garden is to produce high-quality vegetables. Harvest often to get vegetables at the proper stage of maturity. If beans, okra, cucumbers, etc., are left to mature fully, the plant will stop producing. Early morning harvest, before vegetables absorb heat from the sun, is best for most vegetables. Freeze or can the surplus if you want to enjoy your garden all year.

## Alabama Vegetable Garden Planting

These planting dates are for Central Alabama. For South Alabama, make spring plantings approximately 10 days earlier and fall plantings 10 days later. In North Alabama, make spring plantings approximately 10 days later and fall plantings 10 days earlier.

Alabama Vegetable Garden Planting Chart						
Vegetable	Days to Maturity*	Cultivars**	Planting Dates, Spring	Planting Dates, Fall	Seeds or Plants/ 100 ft	Spacing, Rows/ Plants (in.)
Asparagus	2nd year	Mary Washington (female hybrid), UC-157 (male hybrid), Jersey Giant (male hybrid)	April***	-	50-75 crowns	36x9-15
Beans, Bush Snap	50 - 60	Contender, Green Crop, Derby	April	Aug. 5 - 20	¾ lb	36x2-3
Beans, Lima	65 - 75	Fordhook 242, Baby Fordhook, Henderson	Apr. 10 - May 10	July 20 - Aug. 5	¾ lb	36x3-6
Beans, Pole Lima	80 - 85	Carolina Sieva, Florida Speckled, King of the Garden	Apr. 15 - May 15	July 15 - Aug. 1	½ lb	36x6-8
Beans, Pole Snap	60 - 75	Dade, Kentucky Wonder, Kentucky Blue	Apr. 10 - May 10	July 20 - Aug. 5	¾ lb	36x3-6
Beets	55 - 65	Asgrow Wonder, Detroit Dark Red	February	August	½ oz	30x2
Broccoli	55 - 75	Green Comet, Green Duke, Packman, Premium Crop, Mariner	-	Aug. 1 - 15	½ oz	36x18
Brussels Sprouts	90 - 120	Long Island Improved, Jade Cross Hybrid, Prince Marvel	-	Aug. 1 - Sep. 1	½ oz	36x18
Cabbage	60 - 85	Bravo, Charleston Wakefield, Round Dutch, Stonehead Savoy Cabbage: Ace	Jan. 1 - Feb. 15***	July 2 - Aug. 10	½ oz	36x12
Oriental Cabbages	45 - 60	Michihli, Bok choy, Pak choy, Napa	-	Aug. 1 - 15	½ oz	36x12
Carrots	60 - 80	Chantenay, Danvers 126, Lady Fingers, Scarlet Nantes, Thumbelina	March	July 20 - Sep. 20	¼ oz	30x1-2
Cauliflower	60 - 75	Snowball, Snow Crown, Violet Queen	Jan. 1 - Feb. 15***	July 25 - Aug. 10	½ oz	36x12

Vegetable	Days to Maturity*	Cultivars**	Planting Dates, Spring	Planting Dates, Fall	Seeds or Plants/ 100 ft	Spacing, Rows/ Plants (in.)
Collards	60 - 80	Champion, Georgia Southern, Vates, Top Bunch	-	July 1 - Sep. 15	½ oz	36x12-18
Corn, Sweet	65 - 90	Silver Queen, Golden Queen, Seneca Chief, How Sweet It Is, Merit, Snow Belle	Mar. 1 - June 1	-	¼ lb	36x12-18
Cucumbers	50 - 65	Pickling: Calypso, Explorer Slicing: Dasher II, Fanfare, Salad Bush, General Lee	Apr. 15 - May 15	July 1 - 20	1 oz	60x24
Eggplant	65 - 85	Black Beauty, Black Belle, Classic, Ghost Buster, Ichiban	Apr. 15 - May 15***	July 1 - 20***	50 plants	36x24
Kale	50 - 70	Dwarf Scotch, Vates	-	Aug. 15 - Sep. 15	½ oz	36x10
Kohlrabi	45 - 55	Grand Duke, Rapid	March	Aug. 15 - Sep.	½ oz or 150 - 200 plants	24x6
Lettuces	45 - 85	Leafy lettuces: Blackseeded Simpson, Salad Bowl, Red Sails. Bibb: Buttercrunch, Summer Bibb. Leafy salad greens: Arugula, Chicory (Radicchio), Corn Salad	Jan. 15 - Feb.***	Aug. 15 - Sep. 1	⅛ oz	30x12
Muskmelons	75 - 90	Aurora, Ambrosia, Chilton, Gulf Coast, Athena	April	-	1 oz	60x24
Mustard	40 - 50	Florida Broadleaf, Giant Southern Curled, Red Giant	Feb. 1 - Mar. 15	Aug. 15 - Sep. 5	½ oz	30x2
Okra	50 - 65	Clemson Spineless, Emerald, Lee, Burgundy	Apr. 10 - June 30	-	1 oz	36x12
Onions, Bulb	100 - 200	Fresh bulb: Granex 33, Grano 502, Grano 1015. Long-storing bulb: Yellow, White, Red.	Jan. 15 - Mar. 15***	Sep. 15 - Oct. 15	½ oz or 400 plants	30x2-4
Onions, Green	40 - 55	Multiplying: Evergreen	-	October - February	1 qt	30x2-4
Peas, Garden	60 - 70	Little Marvel, Green Arrow, Snappy, Victory Freezer	February	-	1 lb	36x2
Peas, Southern	60 - 70	Pinkeye Purple Hull, Mississippi Purple, Mississippi Silver, Freeze Green	April - July	-	½ lb	42x4-6

Vegetable	Days to Maturity*	Cultivars**	Planting Dates, Spring	Planting Dates, Fall	Seeds or Plants/ 100 ft	Spacing, Rows/ Plants (in.)
Peppers	65 - 85	Hot: Cayenne, Super Chili, Habanero, Hungarian Wax, Jalapeno. Sweet: Sweet Banana, Gypsy, Keystone Resistant Giant, Golden Summer, Chocolate Beauty, Purple Beauty, King Arthur, Bell King	Apr. 1 - May 10***	July***	50 plants	36x24
Potatoes, Irish	70 - 90	Red LaSoda, Red Pontiac, Sebago, Superior	February	Aug. 1 - 15	12 lbs	36x12
Potatoes, Sweet	90 - 120	Beauregard, Georgia Red, Red Jewel	Apr. 15 - June 15***	-	100 plants	36x12
Pumpkins	90 - 110	Autumn Gold, Connecticut Field, Baby Bear, Jack Be Little, Peak A Boo, Spookie	July	-	1 oz	72-96x36-60
Radishes	25 - 30	Cherry Belle, Scarlet Globe, White Icicle	Feb. 1 - Apr. 1	Sep. 1 - Oct. 15	½ oz	24x1
Rutabagas	90 - 120	American Purple Top	-	July	½ oz	36x6-2
Spinach	40 - 45	Bloomsdale Longstanding	Feb. 15 - Mar. 15	Sep.	1 oz	30x2-3
Squash, Summer	40 - 55	Dixie, Yellow Crookneck, Yellow Straightneck, Cocozelle, Freedom III, Lemondrop (straightneck), Prelude III (crookneck), Sundrops, Tivoli; Zucchini: Elite	April	Aug. 1 - 15	1 oz	36x15
Squash, Winter	85 - 100	Acorn, Cream of the Crop, Winter Butternut, vegetable Spaghetti Squash	April	July 15 - Aug. 1	½ oz	60x36
Swiss Chard	60 - 70	Fordhook Giant, Rhubarb Chard	Feb. 15 - Mar. 15	Sep.	½ oz	36x15
Tomatoes	70 - 90	Atkinson, Better Boy, Big Beef, Celebrity, Husky Gold, Monte Carlo, Small Fry, and Sweet Chelsea (cherries)	April***	July***	35 - 50 plants	60x24-36
Turnips	40 - 60	Purpletop, Shogoin, Just Right (roots)	Feb. 1 - Apr. 1	Aug. 10 - Oct. 1	¼ oz	30x2
Watermelons	80 - 90	Bush Sugar Baby, Charleston Gray, Crimson Sweet, AU Golden Producer (yellow meat)	April	June 15 - 30	½ oz	96x96

\*Days to maturity are from planting seed or setting transplants in the garden. The number of days will vary depending on cultivar (some mature earlier than others), temperature, and general growing conditions. Check catalogs for individual maturity time.

\*\*Cultivars listed in this chart represent a few of those recommended for Alabama. There are many other good cultivars that are worthy of trial in the home garden.

\*\*\*Transplant



Kerry Smith, Administrator of Outreach Programs, Mary Beth Musgrove, Former Extension Specialist, Joe Kemble, Extension Specialist Professor, Ellen Bauske, Former Extension Specialist, David Williams, Former Extension Specialist, and Dean Bond, Former Extension Specialist

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