

WHEN TO PLANT

Garden planting dates (short list) for Pendleton/Hermiston areas (as presented in the “Growing Your Own” published by OSU Extension Service):

Lettuce, Onions	February-April	Carrots, Summer Squash, Snap Beans,	
Chard, Parsley	February-May	Corn, Cucumbers	April-June
Rhubarb, Chives	February-March	Broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, Cabbage	April-July
Turnips	February-August	Tomatoes	May
Peas	March-April	Onions, Peppers	May-June
Potatoes	March-June	Kale	May-July
Beets, Spinach	March-July	Celery	June-August
Radishes	March-September	Spinach	September-January
		Garlic	November-February

Mark Twain’s wise words on gardening

By BILL DOCHNAHL
OSU Master Gardener

Spring is here and trying to warm up our garden beds to bring those sleepy microscopic microbes to life again that’s laid dormant within our last year’s garden soil. Mark Twain — a sometimes impatient gardener — once quipped when asked if he was anxious for winter to end and his spring garden to be planted, saying: “I believe God made the long winter so aging, over-worked backs had enough time to repair like the tired toiled soil I turned over in my garden probably one too many times last year ... and time to turn over in my mind once more how to outsmart those damn squirrels that feast on my summer squash without turning to say much obliged.”

Early Spring Preparation:

1. Get seed catalogs out to order the varieties you want to include in your spring garden. There are many to choose from, but here are a few of my favorites: Seeds of Change (seedsofchange.com); Burpee (burpee.com); Territorial Seed Company (TerritorialSeed.com); and one of the best organic garden seed catalogs, Gardens Alive (GardensAlive.com). It’s time to begin planning for spring annual fill-in transplants (ready to bloom).

2. Great gardens always start with good soil. Have a soil test performed for both garden and home orchard if it hasn’t been done: a) low production of crops last 2-years and previous year’s nutrient amendments did not generate adequate results, or b) if soil has not been tested 5-years or more. Contact OSU Extension (541-278-5403) for soil test services. Basic nutrient test kits also can be purchased which are suited for home gardens.

The best soil is that which feels rich and loose (but not falling apart) in the hands — rich in humus. If water is added and it feels more like you can make a clay pot, you have a predominantly clay soil. If it feels more like granular soil and falls between your fingers, you have a predominantly sandy soil. Clay soils can be amended with peat moss, gypsum and the



The type of soil has a big effect on the kind of plants you can grow. Seen here, clockwise from top-left, sand, loam, clay and silt.

like — with added sandy material to help balance. Silt soils feel smooth — the type of soil near stream beds (or where such streams or rivers once ran). Organic materials is always the best additive to rejuvenate a tired, compacted garden soil.

3. Crop rotations and cover crops are an excellent way to keep the garden soil rich, and replenished each year.

4. Blueberries and raspberries (summer and fall-bearing) can be pruned/shaped in March-April. Begin to amend soil with an acidifier (commercially available) liquid or granules for blueberries to lower the pH level to below 4.5 for ultimate production results. Coffee grounds also are a good organic source to help acidify soil.

5. Divide rhubarbs every 3 years, and treat with manure or a complete fertilizer.

6. Plant seed flats of cold crops (e.g. cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts) indoors or in greenhouse.

7. Get cold frames ready for April transplants that may need protection during continued freeze periods. Also, plant seed flats inside for protection for early spring flowers to plant with your eatable garden to help attract pollinators.

8. It’s best to wait until the first full



Master gardener Bill Dochnahl shows mint to students as part of a plant identification exercise during Watershed Field Days in 2015.



Tomatoes are best planted in May in Eastern Oregon.

moon after Mother’s Day to plant tomatoes to avoid the last potential frost — according to the experience of many Master Gardener enthusiasts I have the privilege to know.

9. Always read the labels carefully of any pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, and the like, and apply as prescribed. More gardens have been compromised when label warnings have been ignored.



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