



Knowing what to grow and when

How to know what to grow and when

For success in growing vegetables it is important to understand what options are best suited to your location and the time when seeds or seedlings should be planted to take advantage of the conditions most favourable for their growth.

Become familiar with your food options

There are a range of different food types you could consider growing. These include:

Vegetables

- Legumes are a good source of proteins
- Potatoes and beets are an excellent source of complex carbohydrates, as well as minerals
- Leaf vegetables, like cabbage and lettuce, as well as vining vegetables like cucumbers and squash, are a good source of many essential vitamins and minerals

Fruits & Berries

- Plums, apricots, apples, pears, and many others
- Raspberries, strawberries and blueberries

Grains

- Corn
- Wheat
- Oats
- Rice
- Other grains include barley and rye, which are similar to wheat and oats


Herbs

- Parsley, basil, thyme, oregano, and many others

Determine what you can grow in your location

Obvious factors that need to be considered when determining what to grow include: climate, soil, rainfall, sunlight exposure and available space.

A fast and fun way to learn what grows well in your climate is to visit a nearby farm or garden.



Learning what to grow when addresses the Permaculture Principals – Observe and Interact | Obtain a Yield | Apply Self-Regulation and Accept Feedback.

Getting to know your garden with its sunlight, soil and seasons helps you choose plants that will grow healthy and strong. As you tend your garden over time, watch how it grows, even keep a journal – you will be able to continually refine your knowledge of which plants to grow and when.

Understand how growing seasons work

Growing food is more than just planting seeds and waiting for them to grow. A vital step towards a productive veggie patch and healthy garden is knowing what to plant and when.

- **Beans, peas, and other legumes** are planted after the threat of frost, and require 75 to 90 days to produce fruit. These can continue producing as long as the plants are cared for until autumn frost.
- **Gourds** - this group of plants includes squash, melons, and pumpkins, and is planted after the last expected frost. They take between 45 days (cucumbers) to 130 days for pumpkins, to produce harvestable fruit.
- **Tomatoes** can be planted in containers if kept warm, and transplanted into soil after the threat of frost. They will produce season-long.
- **Grains** - there is a great difference in growing seasons with grains, as well as summer and winter varieties of many of these. Generally speaking, summer grains, such as corn and summer wheat, are planted near the end of winter when freezing temperatures are not expected to continue for more than a few weeks, and they take about 110 days to mature, then another 30-60 days to dry sufficiently to harvest for storing as seed.
- **Fruits** such as apples, pears, plums, and peaches are regarded as orchard fruits, and do not require annual planting. The trees that bear these fruits require pruning and maintenance and usually take 2-3 years before producing their first, modest crop. When the trees begin producing fruit, the yield should increase yearly.

Below is a list of various planting calendars appropriate to the Canberra frosty winters and hot summers.

- [Canberra Organic Growers Society's Planting Calendar](#) is a fantastic resource for gardeners.
- [The Canberra Plant Selector](#) provides information on a range of plants, their sun, shade and frost tolerances and water requirements; you can choose plants suited to your garden site and save water.
- [Canberra Gardener](#) by the Horticultural Society of Canberra provides information on appropriate plants for the Canberra conditions, including a revised calendar.
- [Oz Gardener](#) has a list of plants that grow well in the Canberra region. Information about growing citrus, soil, frosts and watering specific to the Canberra region is also available.
- [Gardening Australia](#) has a fact sheet about gardening in Canberra, including information on how to make your garden more sustainable.

Begin your garden in stages

Talking to people in your area can provide you with the best source of specific information on selecting your crops and planting times, but if this is not an option, plant "trial" plantings of new crops the first year to see how well they produce.

References: [viewed 12 August 2013]

- www.wikihow.com/Grow-Your-Own-Food
- www.cogs.asn.au/planting-calendar
- www.ecoaction.com.au/resources/backyard/grow-your-own-food/take-action-growing-food-in-your-backyard



For further information on this topic

Canberra Organic Growers (COGS): COGS is a non-profit organisation which was started in 1977 with the aim of providing a forum for organic growers to exchange information and encourage the general public to adopt organic growing methods. www.cogs.asn.au

Canberra Environment and Resource Centre (CERC): CERC has a mission to work directly with the community to ensure the best environmental outcomes for the ACT through targeted education, information and practical application. www.ecoaction.com.au