

MARCH VEGGIE GARDENING 2025

March can be a very busy month and most of it is not outdoors. Fruit and vegetable gardeners should get busy in March as there are lots of things to do.

GARDEN CHORES

-Finish cleaning up garden if not already done last fall. Compost old foliage with no seeds or diseases.

-Remember to dispose tomato and squash plants, not compost them as they may harbor diseases that you don't want to respread. Other debris can go in a compost pile.

Add finished compost to top of beds and dig in lightly.

FRUIT MAINTENANCE

-**Prune your fruit trees**-last chance before they produce blossoms. You want to prune before blossoms. Buds are already happening so get on it soon.

-**Prune all berry and grape plants**-There are many videos on You Tube to show you how. Don't just go and hack them back, look up your variety.

-**Spray your fruit trees with dormant oil**-Do this before the buds turn color to smother any dormant bugs that may have overwintered. This could help with coddling moths. Also put out coddling moth traps in late March.

SOIL

- Doing stuff with the soil can be tricky in March but usually doable depending on the weather. Some places in your garden might still be frozen depending on your garden. Things like shade really keep the ground from being worked but towards the end of March and into April we can certainly start adding compost to the beds and other soil amendments.

INSECTS

Spray your fruit trees with dormant oil before their buds turn color to smother any dormant bugs that may have overwintered. This could help with coddling moths. Also put out coddling moth traps. You can buy them at some of the nurseries or online.

SEED ORDERING

It's not too late to order seeds. Go over what seeds you have and finish ordering your seeds if you haven't already. I just went through all my seeds and got rid of all my seeds that are too old. This helped me to see what I still have and what I should order or reorder. If you're not sure about the age of your seeds, look at the date on the seed packages and check to see how old they are against a seed lifespan chart. You can find this on my website, giantveggiegardener.com or elsewhere on the internet.

What SEEDS can I start INSIDE?

TOMATOES-YES INSIDE/NO OUTSIDE or buy plants at a nursery later

Start tomato seeds inside, in germination trays, on a heat mat with a thermostat, under lights 5-7 weeks indoors before May 15. Look at my website for more info on how to start seeds inside.

Don't forget May 15 is the FIRST FROST FREE DATE so is generally safe to put out tomatoes with wall of waters protection. You might be able to plant them earlier outside if we have a warm spring, like I did last season. I got them in the ground May 3 but only plant them outside if you have walls of water around each plant. WOWs retain the heat from the day and give it back to the plant at night protecting the plant from cold nites as low as 12°F, protection from winds as strong as 40 mph, and from animal activity. If you don't want to start them yourself, you can buy them at a nursery.

PEPPERS/EGGPLANTS-PLANT SEEDS INSIDE or buy plants at a nursery later

Pepper and eggplant seeds should be started from seeds 8-12 weeks inside on heat mats with a thermostat, under lights. I transplant them outside around June 1 as they both hate cold nights and can stall out if you put them out earlier. I plant them in wall of waters too for protection against cold nights. If you don't want to start them yourself, you can buy them at a nursery. Peppers and eggplants like warm weather before planting so no matter if you are growing your seeds or buying plants, don't put them outside till June 1 or later.

ALL COOL SEASON CROPS/SPINACH, LETTUCE, GREENS-YES-Plant inside or outside with protection

All cool season crops can be started inside in March and some planted outside with row cover protection from late-March weather permitting.

COLD TOLERANT LETTUCE-GROW IN SPRING GROW INSIDE

Since most lettuces are cool season crops and take around 45-60 days to mature to full heads, we need to back up our start date to sometime in March inside under lights and harvest in April or early May before it gets too hot. Be sure to grow lettuces that are cold tolerant and bolt resistant in the spring-it should say on the seed packets. Last year I started lettuces in February inside my house under grow lights with NO heat mat-this is very early so I was pushing it. The advantages to starting seeds indoors before transplanting outside is you can get started 3 to 4 weeks earlier and you can space your seedlings correctly when transplanting in order to get as large a head as possible. Do not plant lettuce seeds deeply, as they need some light to germinate. I sprinkle sand over them lightly. Water immediately after sowing seeds.

WHEN TO PLANT OUT

Cool weather crops do best planted in the spring and fall, when the daytime high stays below 75F, and nighttime temps hover between 30-40°F. That said, lettuce and spinach can take much colder conditions with some protection, such as a cold frame with row cover over them. If you don't want to start them yourself, you can buy lettuce starts at a nursery.

So, what if you don't want to start seeds inside?

You can transplant the following OUTSIDE from starts you buy in mid-March:

COOL SEASON CROPS PLANTED OUTSIDE by direct seeding (Cover all new seedlings with medium weight row cover for protection from cold nites). Keep moist daily for germination.

-peas-Plant around St. Patrick's Day

- Fava Beans**-PLANT MID-MARCH-great flavor and likes the cold
- cold hardy lettuce**-MID-MARCH/APRIL
- Asian greens**-pak choi, tatsoi, bok choi, mustards
- radishes**-plant in March/April
- spinach**-very cold hardy
- arugula**-very cold hardy
- endive**-very cold hardy
- onions, leeks**-very cold hardy/Plant by sets

CROPS TO WAIT TO PLANT TILL APRIL BY SEED:

- beets**-EARLY-MID APRIL
- carrots**-EARLY-MID-APRIL
- chard**- APRIL
- kale**-EARLY-MID APRIL

Don't forget the Seed Library. The Seed Library opens on March 22 where gardeners can get free seeds. And on the Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners site, sfemg.org., they have information sheets on growing plants from seeds.