

APRIL VEGGIE GARDEN 2025

The first day of spring was on March 20th and is known as Spring Equinox or Vernal Equinox in the Northern Hemisphere. It is determined by where the earth is as it orbits around the sun. On Spring Equinox, the earth is not tilted either away or towards the sun, causing equal day and night hours. So, this means for us, the days will be getting longer from here on until Fall Equinox. Yay!

Spring Equinox represents the beginnings of spring and oh, how I long to see more 'green'. Also, the winds have been particularly brutal this year in March, and I read we had up to 70 mph winds gusts. I also heard it got down to 19°F here in Santa Fe on March 16. I hope the wind and the juniper pollen will abate soon. I am glad we can start to go outside and enjoy sun too.

What it means to me is wake up my sleepyhead and start to get busy for this season veggie garden. I've already started seeing tulips, crocus and other flowers peek thru the ground in the gardens. Leaves are starting to bud on plants and some trees and of course WEEDS are starting to appear too.

TOMATOES/PEPPERS

This year I got a **late start to starting some of my veggie seeds-specifically tomatoes and peppers** inside the house. I planted them March 23 which is the latest I've ever planted those seeds. Usually, I plant peppers in the very beginning of March as it takes so long for them to get to transplanting size. Also, I will not grow lettuce right now as the temps are heating up in the day and I think they would bolt before I could even harvest. So, I will support our Farmers Market and get my greens from those growers. I could check the nurseries here too to maybe pick up some greens that are ready to transplant now.

I normally start pepper/tomato seeds much earlier in March because they take longer to get to transplant size for the garden than say greens. But I returned from a Paris and Berlin trip on Tuesday, March 18. Spring is just starting over there (a little, like here), not much budding yet-lots of sleeping trees and bushes.

KARL FOERSTER GARDEN

While visiting Berlin, I did see one very inspiring garden (it was already getting green) outside of Berlin in Potsdam, Germany while visiting a good friend. It was fantastic. It's not till I got home and wrote my friend for the name of the garden and she wrote back it was someone named Karl Foerster.

KARL FOERSTER GARDEN

This 100-year-old garden was beautifully designed. Now my friend is not really a gardener and didn't know who he was. Karl Foerster was a famous botanist who breed over 370 new perennial plants in his lifetime in his greenhouses, nurseries and gardens outside his house. He is a legend to gardeners and a wonderful garden designer.

One plant you might recognize is Karl Foerster's feather reed grass. He had an interest in developing many other plants including *Delphiniums*, *Rudebeckia* and *Phlox*. The nursery focused on breeding hardy perennials from all over the world. He heavily influenced the "New German Garden Style" which focuses on low-maintenance gardening and four-season interest. Those concepts continue to be popular in garden design today. He has ponds, rock gardens and an informal garden with a beautiful bird house designed for doves which appealed to me vs the formal gardens at castles. Even though I didn't see any veggies in it, I loved it. You can read more on this on a post on my internet site, giantveggiegardener.com.

Meanwhile here, the days and nights are still cold but the days are starting to get warmer this week. Yay! Time to shake off the winter blues and get busy in our gardens!

So, what can we do in April in our gardens?

WEED CONTROL

Put CORN GLUTEN down in your veggie garden paths but NOT in your beds. It is a PRE-EMERGENT for controlling weed seeds and is ORGANIC BUT if your weeds are up already, it acts as a fertilizer. (It is very high in nitrogen and that is why it burns the seedlings but will also feed weeds that are established. Don't put it on veggie beds where you will be planting any seeds as it will burn any seeds.

YOU CAN START TOMATO SEEDS

I planted my tomato seeds March 22-23 this year and like I said earlier I got a later start date. That means they won't be ready to transplant out in the garden till later. Maybe May 15, which is the last freeze date. You can plant them outside anytime between 5-8 weeks old in wall of waters (WOW). WOWs protect the plants from our cold nites. The nice thing about growing your own tomatoes from seed is that you can try a lot of different varieties of tomatoes that you can't get in the nurseries. If you don't want to try growing tomatoes this year, you can buy tomato plants and transplant them after May 15 in WOWs.

PEPPERS

Too late to plant by seeds inside for most gardeners in April. Instead, buy plant starts from a nursery but do not plant outside till **first week of June**. Agua Fria probably has the largest selection of peppers and tomatoes. Peppers hate the cold but many people get impatient and plant anyway. Most of the time pepper plants will stall out if they get cold, meaning they stop growing and you'll have to buy more pepper plants again.

WHAT CAN YOU PLANT OUTSIDE BY SEED-COOL SEASON VEGETABLES

You can plant peas, carrots, beets, lettuces, spinach, all greens either by seed or transplants outside. I use row cover to protect them on our cold nights below 32 degrees. Put it on at night and roll it off in the morning if warm and then recover your beds at night. Leave it on if we have a really cold snap in the day.

OTHER CROPS TO PLANT

POTATOES

Plant potatoes in April- Get potato seeds (they are little potatoes) from the local nurseries, not from the grocery store-sometimes they have been sprayed so not to sprout. Dig a trench 10 inches deep and space them 12 inches apart cover the potato seeds with about 3-4 inches of soil and as they grow cover them (leaves and all with soil) till the trench is filled. Then keep piling on the dirt. The tubers will grow between the potato seeds and the top of the ground.

SHALLOT

You can plant bulbs in April to harvest in fall. Shallots should be planted with the root side down/pointy side up and just barely showing after you plant so not very deep.

ONIONS

Go to a nursery to get the correct day length onion BULBS for our area. **We can grow short-day or intermediate-day onions here in Santa Fe.** Not long-day onions which are grown further north. Long day onions will not ripen in time. Get the bulbs & plant with the tops 1" below the surface. It is too late to plant onions from seeds-that would have been inside under lights in February.

PERRENIAL FRUIT AND VEGETABLES-Asparagus, grapes, strawberries & (all berries) and Rhubarb should start coming up if you have them. Start watering them in earnest. Don't forget to water your fruit trees! Apricot trees start blooming in April which means if we get another hard freeze, the blossoms drop off.

STRAWBERRIES

Clean out strawberry beds. Rake out old leaves and take out any old crowns-this leaves room for younger plants to spread. Sprinkle yum-yum mix, rock phosphate and greensand over bed and water in heavily as they haven't had much moisture. Then start watering regularly 1x a week.

GARLIC

Garlic that we planted last fall is now coming up nicely. I have straw on my beds to help keep water from evaporating. Be sure to water 1x/week. If you didn't get garlic in the ground last fall, you can plant now. The heads will just be smaller and you will harvest later this summer than fall planted garlic which is harvested in early summer.

CARROTS

I find carrots can be easy or challenging and I'm not always sure why. One year I planted seeds in March outside and hardly any germinated-it was too cold. Plant carrots mid-April by seeds directly in the ground. Cover with row cover and water directly thru the row cover so the seeds don't move.

So get busy now gardeners!
