

WEATHER

Horrible winds this spring have been bad. I don't think I've ever seen such bad winds and I've been here for 30 years. Keep an eye on the weather temps and plant accordingly. This year neither a La Niña nor El Niño conditions are present. This neutral state is expected to continue through the Northern Hemisphere summer. La Niña has already ended and is not forecast for the summer.

WEEDS

HOW TO CONTROL WEEDS ORGANICALLY-3 ways

-Pull or cut off weeds in the garden and around the perimeter.

-Stirrup hoe-Use this style of hoe to cut off annual weeds. A stirrup hoe is unique in that where most hoes only cut when you pull it towards you, a stirrup hoe will cut in both directions-pushing or pulling. It's called a stirrup hoe because it is shaped like the stirrup on a horse saddle. This is my go-to tool for weeding.

-Use 20-30% vinegar to spray persistent weeds-90% kill rate. Designate a gallon hand sprayer to use with vinegar as you don't want to accidentally get any residue of the vinegar on your plants as it will kill them. Get it on the Internet. Regular vinegar (5%) doesn't work.

-Use a pre-emergent down like **corn gluten** in your veggie paths not your beds. Corn gluten is high in nitrogen & will kill seedlings as they germinate. Get it online. Also I use PREEN Weed Preventer which is not organic on my driveway and paths but NOT in the veggie garden.

DRIP SYSTEM-

Install, replace or repair your drip system. Don't have a drip system? Put one in. They are simple to do and will really conserve water and gets the water down to the roots where the plant needs it. Then you can spend your time doing other things besides hand watering and reduce your water bills.

TIPS

-DAYS TO HARVEST-also called Days to Maturity

The time it takes for a plant to grow from seed to harvest. You can find this info on your seed packet or plant tag.

When seeds are directly sown in the garden, count the day from when the seeds germinate until the first harvest to determine the days to harvest. I direct seed a lot of warm season crops in June. I use Sluggo PLUS which is organic to deter roly poly bugs from eating your newly germinated crops. Follow directions.

Tomatoes, peppers, eggplants are usually transplanted in the garden as we have a short growing season so don't plant by seeds now. You count from the day you transplant.

Tomatoes are classified as early season, mid-season or late season tomatoes.

Early season is in the 50-64 Days to harvest, Mid-season from 65 days to 78 days and late season is 80 day+. Many people write me later and say how come they have green tomatoes. It might just be because you bought some late season varieties. Look on your label or packet to see.

TOMATO TIP

-Beet Leafhopper-They are a problem in our dry, hot windy months which are generally May and June. They can bite your tomato plant and give it a deadly virus called Curly Top Virus. The only way to keep this from happening is to completely **2**cover your tomatoes with medium weight (.5) row cover to act as a physical barrier from this bug. I've heard some people put in bigger plants after the monsoons comes without protection in but I worry about our short season and whether I would have enough time to harvest.

PEPPER TIP

-Transplant pepper (and eggplant) plants after June 1. Peppers hate cold nites and will stall out and stop growing if you plant them too early. Then you will have to go buy more.

SQUASH TIP

Squash vine borers (SVB) -Keep row cover over your squash as it grows. SVBs leave right about the time the female squash flowers come and then you take off the row cover as the bees need to do the pollinating for us.

People ask every year why do their squash have flowers but no fruit. The reason is the male flowers come first-about two weeks earlier than the female flowers. How can you tell the difference? The female flowers have a baby fruit at the base of the flowers and the males don't. By the time the female flowers arrive, usually the squash vine borer's life cycle is done and you have to take off the row cover that was protecting them so the pollinators can do their job.

TOMATO TALK

- This year I planted my tomato plants in the ground on May 2 which is the earliest I've ever planted. And as always, I use wall of waters to help the tomatoes stay warm with our cold nights. Remove the **Wall of Waters** once tomato plants reach top of them and start growing out of them. Your tomatoes will thank you for leaving them on longer as the nights are still in the 30-40's, which is cold for a tomato plant. But don't leave them on all season-they are only an early extension. When the weather gets hot, take them off or you could fry your plants.

-Once you remove the WOWs, put on cages and cover your tomato plants with **row cover** around your cage and over the top too to prevent the leafhopper from biting your plant and transmitting **Curly Top Virus** disease-a fatal virus to tomato plants

-Put straw under tomato plants as a mulch to help retain moisture and to protect plants from soil borne diseases such as **Early Blight** from splashing up on the lower leaves. Remove branches that will touch the ground, this will help protect against soil diseases.

Tomato blossom drop will probably happen in June when it gets over 92°F. They drop blossoms but will continue to make more and will set tomatoes when the temperature drops with the monsoons hopefully in July. This is the number one question I get all the time when everyone has plants but no fruit.

PROBLEMS- TIME TO LOOK FOR BUGS!

-Roly Poly bugs can cut your new emerging seedlings down like a weed whacker. I had to plant bean seeds 3x a couple of years ago because of them. Now I put an organic product called SLUGGO PLUS on top of the ground right after you plant the seeds before they come up and again sprinkle it over the seedlings after they germinate. It's organic and no more problems with germination. After the plants are about 3-4 inches tall, the roly polys aren't interested. I put it down for cucumbers, beans and squash when planting by seeds.

Aphids-To get rid of them, spray them off with a stream of water and then hit them with a NEEM product. It's organic and works well against aphids and thrips. Comes from the Neem tree in India. Plum and peach trees especially attract aphids. Spray in the evening as some trees and plants may be sensitive to it and get burned with heavy sun and it can also hurt bees-so do spray at dusk.

TIME TO PLANT SEEDS

-Start warm season crops like bean, corn, cucumber, squash and flowers by direct planting seeds in ground. Soil is warm enough now. Cover all with row cover until plants are 3-4 inches tall. Keep it from blowing away using rocks or boards. Use **row cover to protect new seedlings** from birds and bugs.

WARM SEASON CROPS PLANTING SEEDS

-Start warm season crops by directly planting in ground by seeds. Follow directions on package as to how deep and spacing for plant seeds. Soil is warm enough now. Cover all with row cover until plants are 3-4 inches tall. Also use row cover to protect new seedlings from birds and some bugs.

You can direct seed the following warm season crops in June:

Beans

Fast growing in warm soil, they can give you a crop in as little as 35 days with some varieties. Look on package to see how many days to harvest.

Plant both pole beans and/or bush beans. Pole beans need a trellis or fence to grow and bush beans can be planted close together and don't need support. For a continuous crop of bush beans, plant every few weeks not all at once. Cover with row cover till bean seedlings are about 3" tall to keep birds from eating them.

Carrots/Beets

Planting carrot seeds by mid-June yields a late summer crop that will keep in the garden until it freezes and that goes for beets as well.

Corn

Corn is a fast growing crop once it germinates. Follow package directions for spacing but plant in a block of at least 3 rows for better pollination. After planting seeds, cover with row cover until baby corn are 3 inches tall to keep birds from eating the seedlings.

Cucumbers

Cucumbers are fast growing and come as either vine or bush cucumber plants. Be careful to pick a variety for the space you have in your garden. Vine cucumbers will need more space than bush varieties. Grow vining varieties up a fence or trellis.

Melons

You need to get the seeds in the ground now as they take a while. Melons need heat and sun to produce good melons. Get an extra early variety (70 days to harvest)

Summer Squash

Summer squash sowed in June will lead to fresh squash and zucchini in late July and August. I keep mine covered with row cover until I see the flowers. Then I uncover them so the bees can pollinate them. They need a pollinator to produce the fruit. You can even plant a little later to be less exposed to squash bugs

Winter Squash

Winter squash can still be grown here but sow seeds or transplant seedling in early June, as many varieties need a long season. Pick varieties that have a shorter harvest like *Waltham Butternut*. A benefit of butternut squash is not as attractive to squash bugs.