

“Year-Round Food Gardening in Sonoma County” Publication

By Master Gardener Penny Fink

I moved to West County four years ago, from a part of California where, since meteorologists began recording such things, snow has been recorded in every month of the year. I actually had a successful vegetable garden, but, obviously I arrived here with no experience with year-round gardening. Happily, I soon found the [“Year-Round Food Gardening in Sonoma County”](#) publication. Now I grow all our vegetables and give plenty away to neighbors.

I use every piece of information in this publication: when to plant, what to plant, how to plant and how to harvest. But there were some items that had me a bit puzzled as to what they meant or how to interpret them, such as “Cool/Warm” and “Days to Maturity.” In the revised edition these are clearly explained. Also, there are small changes in the vegetable list and some of the data. For example, sweet potatoes have been eliminated as Sonoma County weather is rarely sufficiently hot to grow them successfully, and some harvest guidance provides clearer instruction. For me, the new formatting makes reading the information for any particular veggie much easier.

Another change I appreciate is that the *italicized* notes at the end have been made more prominent. Here is where you will find ‘cool’ and ‘warm’ season vegetables defined, and how to interpret “Day to Maturity” and “Planting Window.” These are important to understand in order to maximize the effectiveness of this publication. So let’s expand them here:

- Cool season crops grow best in soil temperatures of 60 - 65 degrees and air temperatures of 55 - 75 degrees. Their seeds can germinate at soil temperatures above 40 degrees but germinate best when the soil temperature is around 70 degrees. Many cool season vegetables can be planted in both late-winter/early-spring and in mid-to-late summer. The late winter plantings will be harvested in early summer, the summer plantings provide harvests in fall and winter. These veggies can handle cooler temperatures—the flavor of Brussels sprouts and kohlrabi is improved by exposure to frosts, and I can attest to their ability to withstand snow. The summer plantings may need to be protected from the heat with mulch, extra water and/or shade-cloth. Also, these plants will mature more slowly as the day-length shortens.
- Warm season crops grow best in soil temperatures of 65 - 80 degrees and air temperatures of 65 - 95 degrees with warm nighttime temperatures. They thrive with long, hot hours of summer sunlight. Cold weather stops growth, and frost generally kills them.
- “Days to Maturity” are affected by the variety of the vegetable, your particular microclimate and the weather. The seed package may say “40 days,” but don’t count on it without ideal circumstances. When growing a veggie from seed, the number refers to the time from when you sow the seed to when you can first hope to harvest something. For transplanted starts, the number refers to the time from when you put the plant in your veggie bed to when you might be able to harvest. If you are planting successive crops of a particular vegetable, the number range, along with your

harvesting needs, should be used as a planning tool. See "[Succession Gardening](#)" to learn more.

And, while waiting anxiously for your soil temperatures to reach the magic 65 degree mark so you can transplant tomatoes and other warm season vegetables, there is still time to plant some cool season veggies. Choosing the right vegetable at the right time is easy with "[Year-Round Food Gardening in Sonoma County](#)."

Happy gardening! Happy eating!

Note: A myriad of food gardening publications can be found in "[MG Publications](#)" on the left navigational column on the home page. Growing tips for specific crops can be found