

## **The May Vegetable Garden-2023**

This is one of the two busiest times of the year for vegetable gardeners. Spring planting and fall harvest.

### **WEATHER**

Its been a very long cold winter and we are finally getting out of it. Coldest winter I can remember in 28 years I've been here. The first 2 weeks of May I start looking at the long-range weather forecast on my phone. The app I use is KOB weather app. It will project out for 15 days. When are they projecting NO more freezes at night? This year the weather people are predicting no freezing nights from April 29- May 9. Still too cold to plant tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants-needs to be warmer at night. However you can plant tomatoes earlier if weather is not freezing at night **AND IF YOU HAVE PROTECTION LIKE WALL OF WATERS AND ROW COVER**

-Water, water, water—all existing trees, bushes, fruits and vegetables—the horrendous winds we've been having dry out everything-so water right now.

### **PERENNIAL CARE**

-Clean up any perennial vegetable beds from the fall if you haven't already. Get rid of debris from last year around plants and mulch with compost. Add Azomite mineral supplement if you have never amended the minerals in your soil. Jus sprinkle on top and scratch it in and then water. Then consider doing it again every 3-4 years.

**-When you transplant out your seedlings, add mycorrhizae. Put it in each hole at the bottom where the roots are if you are using a dry source or water it in solution.**

**But what about perennials fruits and veggies?**

**-How do we get it to the proper areas? You can also add both mycorrhizae and Azomite to your perennial vegetables and fruits if you've never done it. You can water mycorrhizae in from the top but make sure your soil is not bone dry because the mycorrhizal needs to reach the roots so I water well first and then sprinkle on amendments then water in again-maybe even 3 times. For Azomite just sprinkle around root zone and water in.**

### **PERENNIAL PLANTS**

**Rhubarb**-Rhubarb can be harvested after the second year from transplanting. If you are in your second year, don't harvest too much- a few spears. Always take off bulbous blossoms. Don't eat the leaves, only the stems-the leaves have a great amount of oxalic acid and can make you sick but the stems are good to eat.

**Grapes**-mine are not budding and leafing out yet But prune them if you haven't yet. Look up your variety to see how to prune them. Different varieties have different ways to prune.

**Raspberry/other berries** need pruning if you haven't already done so. Normally I trim back my fall bearing raspberries in March or April-water well. Fall bearing raspberries should be trimmed back to 4-5 inches tall. Everbearing raspberries are trickier to figure out which stems to trim back and which to leave-internet has instructions for your variety.

**Strawberries**-rake out old strawberry leaves-water well-add yum yum mix. Might try adding rock phosphate to an older strawberry bed. Take out any mother plants older

than 3 years old. They will produce less. Makes room for the new strawberry plants that the mother plant put out.

**Fruit trees**-Should have pruned them by now but I must confess I haven't done mine yet. I'm sure the apricot blossoms got hurt by our nightly freezes we've had in April. All my blossoms dropped off. The apple trees and just now getting their flower buds.

**Asparagus**-good time to plant it but it takes 3 years before you can harvest it. **Buy crowns not seeds of male varieties like 'Jersey Giant, 'Jersey Supreme' and 'Jersey Knight'** They produce up to three times more than male/female varieties, such as Mary Washington.

### **When to Plant Veggies-what to plant now and what to wait on**

I find the timing of when to plant veggies can be critical for success. May is a huge planting time for most of us so let's go over what to plant and when to plant.

#### **Cool Season Crops**

**Spinach-NO**- It is now too late to start spinach. It will bolt when daylight hours are longer than 14 hours, which will be on May 15 here in the greater Santa Fe area. Longer daylight hours make spinach bolt and temperatures warmer than 80 degrees speeds up the process. An exception is Perennial spinach which can be planted now but put it in a place where it can come back every year. It is a relative of chard.

**Arugula/Bok Choy/cool season lettuces-NO**-Mine are already bolting so I'm harvesting all of them before all the plants bolt (remember bolting is when they put out flowers and taste bitter) if you are too late you can always compost them. There is also 'wild' arugula called that you can plant that will come back each year. **Wild arugula is a perennial plant** that has the advantage of not bolting in hot weather. Just google perennial arugula for seeds. Give it a space to come back every year.

**Kale and Chard-YES** These are two crops that are considered cool season crops but do marvelous in summer as well as into late fall. If you like these two crops, still not too late to plant them. I treat it as an annual even though it is a **biennial plant**. Biennial plants produce lots of leaves the first year (which we eat) and then concentrate their second year on producing seeds. I transplant starts.

**Cabbage/Cauliflower-YES-plant with starts.**

**-Potatoes-YES**-outside in 8-12 inch deep rows. Cover with 3 inches of soil and as the plants grow and reach 6 inches high, fill up more of the trough till the leaves just peak out. Bury the plant-leaves and all but leave a little leaf showing.

**-Plant garlic/shallots cloves in enriched soil with compost.** If transplanting shallots bulbs, sow with the pointy side up and just barely showing the tops through the ground-shallow planted. If planting garlic in the spring, plant about 3 inches deep in soil, pointy side up.

**-Transplant kale, chard, collard starts**-cover with row cover for cold nights

**-DIRECT SEED-carrots, beets, chard, kale, warm season lettuces-called Batavians, other greens, radishes seeds in ground**

## **The heart of the summer garden-warm season crops!**

**Peppers-NO- Plant first week of June.** Why? They will stall out and stop growing if planted too early and mid-May is too early for peppers here at 7000' high. They do not like cold nights much less freezing nights. And forget about growing them from seeds now-they take 8-10 weeks to getting to planting size. We do not have a long enough growing season so I start peppers in early March inside, under lights and on heat mats. Just buy transplants from a nursery if you missed starting seeds.

**Eggplants-NO-Plant first week of June** as well. Again, I buy them from nurseries.

### **BUGS**

Rollie-Pollies may chew them off at the ground when they first germinate so I use **SLUGGO PLUS**, an organic deterrent containing Spinosad. It controls slugs, snails, earwigs, sow bugs (roly poly), pill bugs, and cut worms too. I put the seeds in the ground and sprinkle the Sluggo Plus pellets around where I planted them and once they germinate, I sprinkle a little more around the baby plants. Once they reach 3" high, you can stop using it as the bugs only seem to like the newly germinated plants. I do however put **row cover** over the area where I planted as birds can be a problem too, eating the newly germinated seedlings like corn and beans. Bean sprouts-yumm!

### **TOMATO TALK-**

**Tomatoes-YES- Plant MAY 15 (or earlier with protection)**

**High Temperatures-**When the summers get hot in June, I've had tomato blossom drop when they first produced flowers. Blossom drop is caused by too high a temperature or too low but around here, it is mostly caused by too high a temperature in June when they first produce blossoms. When tomatoes are trying to set their blossoms into fruit, temperatures over 92°F will cause blossom drop. Last June, it was 92+ degrees most of June. The temperature for self-pollination is critical at this time. The tomatoes will still continue to produce blossoms but will only set them below 92°F. They finally set fruit as the monsoons came in and cooled the temperatures. Tomatoes can handle higher heat, just not while they are setting fruit from their blossoms.

So for the last 3 years, I've planted them in the first week of May. It worked. They set some fruit before it got so hot in June so I started harvesting earlier. I put them in Walls-of Waters, which I do every year to protect them from those chilly nights we still get in May. Wall of Waters can **protect plants from cold as low as 12° F**. They keep them warm at night.

But this is always a crap shoot as May 15<sup>th</sup> is the first official frost-free day so I'm putting them tomatoes around two weeks early.

**Wall of Waters-** Wall of Waters are only an early season helper and should be taken off your tomatoes when they reach the top of it and/or it gets hot as you don't want to fry your plants. Where can you get them? Some nurseries here in town carry them. Call first

to make sure they have them. They come 3 in a pack. Big box stores do NOT carry them. I would not try to put your tomatoes in early without them.

**HARVESTING-the following should be harvested as soon as ready**

**-Spinach/arugula/bok choy** should be harvested as soon as the leaves are big enough. Too late to plant more now as it will bolt as soon as the weather warms. Add shade cloth or row cover to extend the season.

**-Cool Season Lettuce** will also start to bolt (blossom and get bitter) so pick it soon. If you planted in a shady area earlier in the spring, you may still have some protection from the warm days. Also using shade cloth or row cover can extend the lettuce season.