

HOW TO READ A SEED PACKET OR SEED CATALOG

The most important thing to know is the first and last frost-free dates for your area, since this will tell you which crops will mature in your growing area. The generally accepted frost-free growing period in our area is from Mother's Day to October 15, which amounts to 161 days. Therefore if the "Days to Maturity" is shown to be longer than this, don't bother to plant. "Days to Germination" gives you an idea how quickly the seeds should pop out of the ground. Most seed packets say to plant seeds outdoor "after all danger of frost is passed", but many can be started

indoors if the facilities are available, and then transplanted outdoors at the right time. Included in this category are tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, all of which need temperatures above 50 degrees at night.

In order for your crops to be harvested by the end of the school year, mid-June, you can count on a growing season of a maximum of ninety days. Cool-weather crops such as peas, spinach, radishes and lettuce can be sown "as soon as the ground is workable". To test if the soil is workable, take a handful of earth and squeeze it in your hand. Open your hand and poke the soil with your finger. If it breaks apart and is crumbly, it's ready, but if it stays together in a clump it is still too wet and you should wait a while longer.

There are many sites to find exact frost free dates for your area. Try NOAA; CT. Agricultural Experimentation Station; Johnny's Select Seeds.

- Eve Mauger
CT Master Gardener

Companion Planting

Companion planting is based on the idea that plants can benefit from being planted close to other plants that are considered friends. By friends I am referring to plants that help each other in using nutrients more efficiently. They attract beneficial insects to control pest problems naturally and they increase crop productivity by attracting pollinators.

- Elaine Hjelte
CT Master Gardener

Here is a list of some vegetable plants with their friends.

Asparagus	dill, coriander, cosmos, calendula, parsley
Beans	savory, tarragon, marigolds
Broccoli	zinnias, asters, marigolds
Cabbage	calendula, chrysanthemums, dill, rosemary, sage, thyme
Carrots	onions
Corn	beans, squash, nasturtiums
Cucumber	nasturtiums, radishes, marigolds
Eggplant	basil, marigolds, dill
Lettuce	carrots, radishes
Peas	carrots, radishes, cucumber
Peppers	coriander, fennel, basil, marigolds
Potato	savory, basil, parsley, coriander, bush beans
Pumpkins	nasturtiums, marigolds
Radishes	cucumbers, mustard, nasturtiums
Tomatoes	basil, marigolds, parsley, borage, savory

