

The Stanislaus County Nutrition Action Plan Partnership (CNAP) is a collaboration of the many nutrition assistance program providers within the County, working towards a common goal of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption of program participants. Stanislaus County CNAP was established in June 2006. Partners include providers of the SNAP (Food Stamp) Program, the WIC Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, Summer Food Service Program, the Elderly Nutrition Program, and the SNAP ED and EFNEP Programs.

# My Garden

## Spring Veggies

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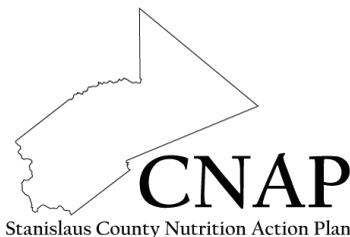
**Gardening with Kids**

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# My Garden

## The Series

### Spring Veggies



An informational guide provided by the Stanislaus County Nutrition Action Plan Partners



# Spring into Gardening!

Growing your own vegetables is fun and easy to do. This guide will tell you what to plant, when to plant, and how to harvest your vegetables.

Vegetables can be divided into two categories: spring veggies and fall veggies. Spring veggies can be planted in spring or summer and harvested in summer or fall.

### How Do I Get Started?

It's easy to get excited and make a huge garden. But if you have never gardened before, it's a good idea to start small. Choose a few veggies and plant 3-4 of each kind.

### When Should I Get Started?

Wait until after March 21<sup>st</sup> before planting. Then, your soil will be warm enough for your veggies.

### How Should I Prepare the Soil?

Mix compost into the soil to a depth of 6-12 inches. Use a rototiller or a shovel. Do not dig in wet soil. This can cause the creation of dirt clods, which make it harder to garden. Wait until soil is somewhat dry. If you want to add manure to your soil, do this several months ahead of time so it can break down into your soil.

### Should I Plant Seeds or Small Plants?

EBT card holders can use Food Stamp Benefits to buy seeds and/or small vegetable plants. Some vegetables, like **zucchini, cucumbers,**

**and corn** are easy to grow from seed. Others, like **tomatoes and eggplant** can be difficult, so you may want to purchase them as plants.

If you want, in late February through March, start your own seeds indoors in 6 pack containers with planting mix. Then, plant seedlings into your garden when they are 6 weeks old.

### How Do I Plant Seeds?

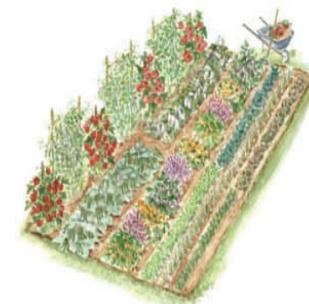
1. Follow seed packet directions on how deeply to plant the seed.
2. Never bury seeds too deep.
3. Keep soil moist until seeds sprout.
4. Keep young seedlings well-watered until they are big.

### Where Should I Plant My Garden?

Veggie plants need 6-8 hours of full sun to thrive. Crops that grow on long vines like **cucumber, melons and squash** need room to spread along the ground. Or they can be planted near a heavy wire fence and trained to grow up it.

### What Should My Garden Look Like?

Measure your yard space. Then, design your garden on paper. **Corn** should be planted in rows so it can pollinate itself. **Pole beans** need a place to climb. **Tomatoes, peppers, okra and eggplant** need about 2 feet of space in between plants. **Squash, cucumbers and**



**melons** need 6-7 feet between each plant. Don't be afraid to experiment with your design. There is no wrong way to create a garden.

## How Should I Water My Garden?

Locate your garden near a water source. A garden hose is the most common way gardeners water their plants. This takes a little time because you have to move the hose to each plant.

A garden can be planted in rows, with basins dug around the plants. Then water can flow down the rows from a hose. Just remember, long furrows are hard to water. Short (20 ft) furrows are easier to water.

Or, plant your vegetable plant or seed, and then dig a small basin around it. Fill the basin with water several times when watering. Then allow it to dry out in between watering.

Drip irrigation is a great way to water without having to be there, because you can use a timer. Consult a hardware store or nursery on installation methods. Check drip emitters weekly to make sure they do not clog.

Sprinkler irrigation is not recommended for vegetable gardens because it does not provide enough deep water. It can also encourage some diseases.

## Should I Fertilize My Veggies?

If you amended your soil with compost before gardening, chances are your plants will have enough nutrients. If you wish to use fertilizer, purchase a 'vegetable' fertilizer and apply it at the rate recommended on the package.

## Can I Garden at My Apartment?

Yes! Many veggies can be grown in 5 gallon containers. Use soil that has fertilizer in it.

# What to Plant & When

<b>March 21<sup>st</sup></b>	Beans (snap or pole), Beets, Carrots, Cucumber, Eggplant, Melons, Peas, Peppers, Radish, Spinach, Squash (zucchini & crookneck), Tomato, Tomatillo
<b>April</b>	Beans (snap or pole), Beets, Carrots, Corn, Cucumber, Eggplant, Lima Beans, Melons, Okra, Peppers, Radish, Spinach, Squash (zucchini & crookneck), Winter Squash (acorn, butternut, etc.), Tomato, Tomatillo
<b>May</b>	Beans (snap or pole), Beets, Corn, Cucumber, Eggplant, Lima Beans, Melons, Peppers, Radish, Pumpkin, Spinach, Squash (zucchini & crookneck), Winter Squash (acorn, butternut, etc.), Tomato, Tomatillo
<b>June</b>	Beans (snap or pole), Corn, Cucumber, Eggplant, Lima Beans, Melon, Parsnips, Peppers, Pumpkin, Squash (zucchini & crookneck), Winter Squash (acorn, butternut, etc.), Tomato, Tomatillo
<b>July</b>	Beans (snap or pole) Corn, Cucumber, Eggplant, Lima Beans, Parsnips, Peppers, Pumpkin, Squash (zucchini & crookneck), Winter Squash (acorn, butternut, etc.)

This lasts for 8-10 weeks. Then, use a vegetable fertilizer. Follow directions on the package.

Containers must have drain holes. If not, drill 4-5 holes that are at least 1/4" wide. Some veggie plants, like **corn**, cannot be grown in containers. Vegetables that work best in 5 gallon containers are **beans, tomatoes, tomatillos, bell peppers, chili peppers, eggplant**, and specific types of **cucumbers and squash**. One plant per pot is best.

When it comes to size, some varieties are smaller than others. Try using these:

**Cucumbers:** 'Burpless' or 'Liberty'  
**Green Beans:** 'Kentucky Wonder' or 'Blue Lake'

**Peppers:** 'Jalapeno' or 'Yolo Wonder'  
**Squash:** 'Zucco' or 'Dixie'  
**Tomatoes:** 'Patio' or 'Pixie'

**Carrots and radishes** can be grown in containers too. More than one plant in one container is fine., as long as they have at least 3" of space on each side of them to grow. The pot should be at least 5-8 inches deep.

Keep pots in full sun for 6-8 hours. Water containers until water drains through. Let soil dry out in between watering. Do not keep soil moist during cool weather. In hot weather, water often so soil does not dry out.

## How Do I Harvest My Veggies?

Most veggies are ripe when they look ripe. Pick **tomatoes, peppers and eggplant** when their color and size look good. Pick **cucumbers and squash** when small because this is when they taste the best. **Beans** are ready when they look ready. Root veggies like **carrots and radishes** can be picked at any size. Leave **pumpkins and winter squash** on the vine until the curly tendril next to the plant has turned brown.

When harvesting, never twist or pull veggies off the plant. If necessary, use pruning shears or a knife. Remember that plants like **squash**,



**pumpkins and okra** may have hairs that irritate your skin. Use gloves when harvesting.

Try to use your veggies right after you pick them. Most veggies can be kept on the counter for a few days. Otherwise store them in the refrigerator. Or you can easily freeze them for future use.

## What about the Salsa Garden?

Plant **onions** using information from the Fall Veggie Guide. Harvest onions at desired size and store in a warm, dry place. Then, pick cilantro, tomatillos, tomatoes and peppers from your spring garden.



**Garden Salsa**

- 2-3 medium tomatoes, diced**
- 1-2 tomatillos, diced**
- 1/2 red onion, finely diced**
- 1 jalapeño chili pepper (seeds and ribs removed), finely diced**
- 1 serrano chili pepper (seeds and ribs removed), finely diced**
- Juice of one lime**
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro**
- Salt and pepper to taste**

**Yum!**