



RGV Homeowner Vegetable Guide

Jennifer Herrera, Texas A&M AgriLife Horticulture Agent

Fernando Lamas, Cameron County Master Gardener

Reviewer: Dr. Juan Anciso, Texas A&M AgriLife Vegetable Specialist

If you are new to gardening in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, be aware that many varieties of vegetables offered at local grocery stores, big box stores, home centers, and hardware stores may not always succeed in this area. Many of the varieties sold in these stores have been selected or bred in areas of the country with climate and growing conditions quite different from ours. There are varieties among these that will still do well in our area, and this is where it is important to use those that have already been tried and tested over the years. There are also some varieties that have been specifically bred to perform well in our area. The varieties listed below are among those that have performed well in the Rio Grande Valley.

We have a unique climate that is different from most of the rest of the country and our gardening season (or seasons) varies considerably. One of the big differences between the Lower Rio Grande Valley and northern states is the very different planting times of the year. We may start planting warm weather vegetables (corn, green beans, peppers, zucchini, etc.) in late February and early March, while in northern states, the planting season may not begin until May or even June. For cool weather vegetables, our growing season is in the fall and winter.

| VEGETABLE | VARIETIES | PLANTING TIMES | NOTES |
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| Green Bean (Bush Types) | Derby, Blue Lake 274, Contender | Early March and again in early through late September for a fall crop | Plant spacing – Sow seed 4-6 inches apart. Thinning is normally not required. |
| Green Bean (Pole Type) | Kentucky Wonder, Blue Lake, Kentucky Blue, Rattlesnake | Early March and again in early through mid-September for a fall crop | Planting up to late September can still be done, but production will be diminished due to the shorter days coming up. Plant spacing – Sow seed 4-6 inches apart. No thinning is required. |
| Sweet Corn | Golden Queen, Silver Queen, G90 | Late February through late March and again in late August to Mid- September for a fall crop | Plant spacing – Sow 4-6 inches apart and thin to 8-12 inches apart. |

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| Pepper | Serrano, Hungarian Wax, Jalapeno, TAM Jalapeno, Cayenne, Ancho | Transplants can be set out in late February through mid-March and again in mid- to late September. | It is best to start seeds in flats and transplant. Seeds should be started about 3-4 weeks before transplanting as indicated at left. |
| Potato | Red LaSoda, Kennebec, Red Norland, Yukon Gold, Pontiac | Mid December through late January | The best time to plant is December, but seed potatoes are often difficult to obtain at this time in the RGV. Potatoes that sprout in January can be harmed by a late frost, but can be protected with mulch. Plant spacing – 1 foot apart. |
| Tomato | Tycoon, Better Boy, Celebrity, Charger | Transplants can be set out in mid-February through early March and again in mid-September through mid-October. For fall plantings, plants can also be planted as early as July, but normally need some protection from the sun, especially in the afternoon. High heat can make plants drop blossoms. | Large tomato varieties have been afflicted by the Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus in the last 12-15 years. Tycoon resists the virus, but it can also be affected by it some years. New variety called Charger seems to resist it. Plant spacing – 2 feet if caged or staked. |
| Watermelon | Legacy, Sangria, Crimson Sweet, Sugar Baby | Late February through late March | Seed can rot in cold ground and if planting in late February, need to watch to see that no cold weather is on the way for the next 5-6 days from date of sowing. Plant spacing – 4-5 feet (3 feet for Sugar Baby). |
| Cantaloupe | Ambrosia (Burpee and others), Caravelle, Mainstream | Late February through late March | The same culture applies as for watermelon. Plant spacing – 3-4 feet. |
| Zucchini Squash | Senator, Black Beauty, Fordhook (Burpee), Desert | Late February to early April and again in late August through mid-September for fall crop. | Plant spacing – 3 feet. |

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| Butternut Squash | Waltham, Early Butternut, Avalon, Canesi | Early March and again in early to mid-September for fall crop | Plant spacing – 3-4 feet. |
| Broccoli | Packman, Belstar, Green Magic, Waltham, Premium Crop, Express, Blue Wind, Arcadia, Marathon | Early September through Early December. | It is best to start the seeds in flats and transplant after about 3-4 weeks when plants are about 3-4 inches tall. Planting times shown at left are for starting from seed. Plants should be put in the ground preferably no earlier than early October but perform best when transplanted by mid-October and later. Plant spacing – 18 inches apart. |
| Cabbage | Late Flat Dutch, Early Jersey Wakefield, Early Dutch, Caraflex, Megaton | Same time as broccoli | Same applies as for broccoli. Plant spacing – 18-24 inches, depending on variety. Flat Dutch may need as much as 30-36 inches. |
| Collards | Champion, Vates, Flash, Georgia Southern | Same time as broccoli | Same applies as for broccoli. Plant spacing – 18 inches. |
| Cauliflower | Snow Crown, Snowball | Same time as broccoli | Same applies as for broccoli. Plant spacing – 18 inches. |
| Kale | Red Russian, Lacinato, Scarlet, Darkibor, Prizm, Winterbor | Same time as broccoli | Same applies as for broccoli. Plant spacing – 18 inches. |
| Kohlrabi | White Vienna, Kossack, Early Purple Vienna | Same time as broccoli | Same applies as for broccoli. Plant spacing – 8-12 inches. |
| Spinach | Bloomsdale Long Standing, Shelby, Renegade, Olympia, Nobel Giant | Mid-October through mid-January | Plant spacing - Sow 2-4 inches and thin to 6 inches. |
| Swiss Chard | Bright Lights, Rhubarb, Fordhook, Red Magic, Red Winter | Mid October through January of following year. | Dates at left represent direct planting on the ground, but seeds can also be started in flats in early September and |

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| | | | transplanted, but transplant no earlier than mid-October. Plant spacing - Sow every 3-4 inches and thin to 6-8 inches. |
| Beets | Early Wonder Tall Top, Red Ace, Detroit Dark Red, Ruby Queen, Merlin | Mid-October through end of December. | Plant spacing – Sow 2-3 inches and thin to 6 inches. |
| Carrot | Imperator, Tendersweet, Scarlet Nantes, Napoli, Sugarsnax, Danvers Half Long, Yaya | Mid-October through mid-December | Seed is tiny and must be buried no deeper than ¼ inch and kept moist until it sprouts. If the ground tends to crust, this can keep the seeds from sprouting. A technique is to cover the row of seed with a good potting soil. This still requires that soil be kept moist until seeds sprout. If soil is very friable, crusting should not be a problem. Plant spacing – Sow approx. ½ inch apart and thin to 1-3 inches apart, depending on variety. |
| Turnip | Tokyo Cross, Purple Top White Globe | Mid-October through mid-December | Plant spacing – sow 3-4 inches apart and thin to about 5-7 inches, depending on variety. |
| Cowpeas | Texas Pinkeye, Dolico | Early March and again in early September for fall crop. | Dolico is a small but excellent Italian variety that can be difficult to find. Plant spacing – Sow 4-6 inches apart. |
| Cilantro | Santo, Slo-Bolting, Marino, Calypso | Early October through early February | Almost any variety of Cilantro does well in the Rio Grande Valley. Plant spacing – Sow 3-4 inches apart and thin to 6 inches apart. |
| Dill | Long Island Mammoth, Dukat, Bouquet | Early October through mid-December | High soil heat seems to reduce germination rate and although it can be planted in early October, it is best to wait until late October or early November. |

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| | | | Sow 3-4 inches apart and thin to 1 foot apart. |
| Onion (Bulbing Type) | 1015Y, Texas Early White | Mid-October through mid-December. | 1015Y should not be planted later than end of October as it takes approximately 150 days to be ready. Seed can be sowed directly on the ground, but please see note on carrots and follow the same practice as seed is very small. Alternatively, onion seed can be started in flats and transplanted as it transplants very well. Transplant when the plant stem is approximately ¼ inch thick or larger. Plant spacing – Sow 1/2 -1 inch apart and thin to 6-8 inches apart. |
| Onion (Bunching Type) | Guardsman | Mid October through mid-December | Follow same practice as for bulbing onions. Plant spacing – Sow 1-2 inches apart and thin to 2-3 inches apart. |
| Leek | Hannibal, but other varieties will do well. | Mid-October through mid-November | Closely related to onion and seed is almost identical, but tends to have poorer germination, so it is best to start in flats and transplant using the same size as for onion transplants. Plant spacing – Sow 2-3 inches apart and thin to 6-8 inches apart. |
| Sweet Potato | Beauregard, Centennial | Late March through end of April | Slips can be started indoors a few weeks before transplanting or they can be purchased, but delivery from most sources is around mid-April for the RGV. Plant spacing – Plant slips 2-1/2 to 3 feet apart. |