

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

Growing and Harvesting in Delaware

Delaware has a USDA Hardiness Zone range of zones 5-7. Usually, Delaware's last frost dates will be early to mid-April, and the state's first frost dates are typically in late October. This leads to an approximate 190 days between the last and first frost in Delaware, which is the prime time that vegetables and other crops will grow in the state.

What to plant and when:

Delaware is a state where cool-weather crop seeds can be planted in the early spring, but some vegetables will do better when started from seed indoors and then transplanted outdoors as seedlings. Mid-May is the safe frost date for Delaware, meaning many of the warm-weather crops will be planted outdoors then.

March: In early March, plant seeds for mustard greens, rutabaga, turnips and peas. In mid-March, plant seeds for cress, kale, radish and spinach. Begin the following vegetables inside and transplant them outdoors in mid-March: asparagus, cabbage, leeks, onion and scallions.

April: In early April, plant seeds for plants like arugula, beets, carrots, chard, endive and lettuce. Begin the following vegetables inside and transplant them outdoors in early April: broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, collards and kohlrabi. In mid-April, plant seeds for vegetables like fava beans, parsnip and Pac Choi and transplant cauliflower and potatoes outside.

May: In early May, transplant celery,



Delaware Planting Calendar on ufseeds.com

celeriac and Chinese cabbage outdoors. In mid-May, plant seeds for bush and pole beans, chicory, corn, cucumber, radicchio, spinach, summer squash and zucchini. In late May, plant seeds for pumpkins, gourds and winter squash and transplant cantaloupe, eggplant, okra, peppers, tomatoes and watermelon plants outdoors.

June: Certain plants like arugula, beans, beets, carrots, chard, cucumber, endive and more can be continued into June or planted again at this time.

July: Some plants like broccoli, cabbage, kale and summer squash can be planted again at this time.

August: For a fall harvest of cool-weather crops, plant beans, cauliflower, mustard greens, radishes, collards, lettuce, turnips and spinach in August. These plants can be continued to be sown into September.



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September: Plant garlic.

October: October is the time to plant a cover crop that will grow during the winter, such as winter rye or crimson clover. This will prepare the soil for the following spring's plantings.

Delaware's soil and how it affects agriculture:

Although Delaware is a small state, its growing environments differ greatly between the piedmont and the coastal plane. The piedmont is a growing environment in the northern-most corner of the state and consists of only about 5 percent of Delaware's land. Its environment includes rolling hills and steep stream valleys, and the soil here is loamy and rich, but the valley's steep inclines consist of rocky, eroded soil. Reversely, the coastal plains comprise 95 percent of the rest of Delaware's land, and this land is tidal estuaries and slow streams. Much of the soil is sandy and varies in greatly in drainage. Some areas are well-drained like the soil near sandy beaches and others are poorly drained and consist of tidal marshes and swamps. Soils will be more of a heavy clay consistency in New Castle and Northern Kent counties, and it will be sandy in southern parts of the state. Clay soils often become waterlogged because of its small pore spaces, and although sandy soils are much better with drainage, they don't hold nutrients well. Although soil texture can't be completely changed, it can be amended with tilling, organic matter or utilizing both tactics.

For both the sandy and clayey soils in Delaware, add organic matter. For sandy



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soils, organic matter will fill the pore spaces in the soil and hold more nutrients and water. Reversely, organic matter will bind the particles of clayey soils into aggregates, which will then improve the drainage.

Soils will be a little acidic in Delaware, and they may require a lime application to aid in vegetable growth.

Average rainfall in different sections of Delaware:

Delaware's average annual precipitation includes both rainfall and snowfall. Average total precipitation ranged from 43.1 inches per year to 46.8 inches per year. Average annual snowfall ranged from 7.8 inches per year to 20.2 inches per year. On average, throughout Delaware there are 201 days annual where it is sunny or partly sunny. Watering plants will be important during summer months, but Delaware will rarely experience a drought.

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