

URBAN FARMER

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Growing and Harvesting in Arizona

Arizona is commonly thought of as a warm-weather state, but the entire state ranges in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 5-9. That means extreme minimum temperatures can be anywhere from -20 to 30 degrees Fahrenheit. This offers lots of options when picking what plants to grow in your garden, what planting schedule best fits your calendar and where best the vegetables will grow in Arizona.

What to plant and when:

Central Arizona to the northwestern, western and southwestern sides of the state are in the higher temperatures, where the northeastern portion of the state is in the cooler section. Much of Arizona is hot and dry, making it an excellent state to grow warm-weather vegetables in. Since much of the state doesn't become too cold in the winter seasons, Arizona provides a good option for year-round growth, with cool-weather vegetables growing in the garden during the winter months. Primarily, vegetables like tomatoes, bell peppers, eggplant and more thrive in Arizona's heat whereas broccoli and spinach seeds are able to be planted in the fall, grown during the winter and harvested in the spring. Be careful with cool-season vegetables like spinach though, because even if it is grown in the cooler parts of Arizona during fall or spring months, hot weather may cause the spinach to bolt.

Arizona has several different growing seasons. February to May is a growing season for warm-weather plants and September to December is a growing season



Arizona Planting Calendar on ufseeds.com

for cool-weather plants. In some areas of Arizona, January also is a month to grow cool-season plants. During the summer, gardens are often summarized, when weather is too hot and arid to grow healthy vegetables. The following is a guide on when to plant seeds in Arizona during different times of the year.

February-May: For a "summer" harvest, plant tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, squash and other warm-weather plants as seeds early to mid-February if you live in Zones 7-9. Harvest these varieties by May. Keep in mind, some of these vegetables will need to be planted at later times based on where you live in the state. For Zones 5-6, the vegetables planted in February will instead be planted as seeds in early- to mid-March based on the last frost date.

June-August: Temperatures will rise well over 100 degrees, and the vegetables in your garden will cease production.



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Depending on which part of the state you live in, some herbs will still grow in the heat. Rosemary and thyme are good options for this, as they are both resilient and drought-resistant. Basil, oregano and mint also may thrive, but plant these herbs in an area that receives shade during the hottest parts of the day.

September-October: Plant the cool-season seeds for Zones 7-9 in September. Cool-season vegetables that thrive in an Arizona garden include broccoli, winter squash and carrots. These will be harvested in December. For Zones 5-6, plant cool-season seeds in early August. These will be ready for harvest in October.

Arizona's soil and how it affects agriculture:

Much of Arizona's soil is a heavy consistency that oftentimes resembles clay. This means it is rich in minerals but not so rich in organic matter, which is why plants like cacti can thrive in Arizona heat because they have little water and nutrition requirements to grow. Since most vegetables require lots more nutrients than plants like cacti, the gardener will need to amend their garden with organic matter prior to planting. This could mean as much as 50 percent of the garden consists of organic matter like compost.

Along with adding more nutrients to the soil, amending the soil with compost and other nutrients make the soil more friable, which means the soil will have more air pockets and will have a less dense consistency. This allows vegetables' roots to spread throughout the soil much more easily than



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if the soil consisted only of clay.

Since July and August can be too hot to grow vegetables in the garden in Arizona, use this time to amend your soil by mixing compost and other nutrients into the garden and giving it time to settle.

Average rainfall in different sections of Arizona:

Just like Arizona varies greatly in its USDA Hardiness Zones, it also varies in the amount of precipitation it receives on average. In northern Arizona, the precipitation amounts have a low of 6.8 inches per year and a high of 22.3 inches per year. In central Arizona, precipitation amounts vary from 9 inches per year to 21.3 inches per year. Western Arizona experiences much less precipitation each year, ranging in a low 3.3 inches per year to 8.4 inches per year.

Southern Arizona experiences, on average, higher amounts of precipitation per year, ranging from 11.6 inches to 22 inches. Much of the precipitation comes in the form as



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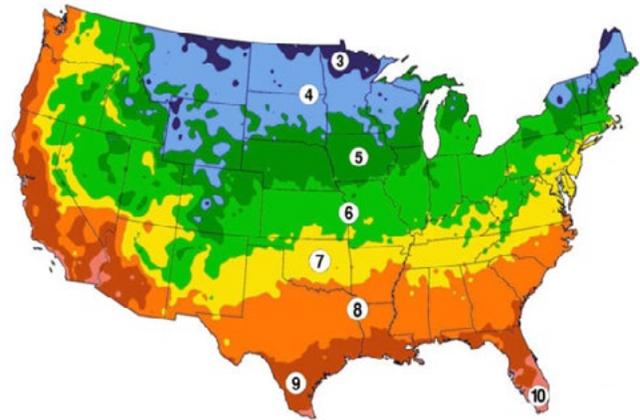
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rainfall, as snowstorms are rarer in Arizona than other states. With its lower precipitation, depending on your location in the state and the time of year you're growing vegetables in your garden, more hand watering or irrigation systems may be necessary.

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[USDA Hardiness Gardening Zone Finder on ufseeds.com](http://ufseeds.com)



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