



Starting Your Garden Workshop

Bill Yoder - Yoder Farms

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- **What and When to plant**

- Now – lettuce/spinach, broccoli, onions
- After frost, mid-to-late April (in the ground by May 1st) – bush beans, pole beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, melons, herbs, corn
- Fall – carrots, brussel sprouts
- If you're hedging on the weather staying warm, and the ground temperature continuing to warm, start with bush beans then follow a week later with pole beans. Pole beans are less tolerant of the cold.
- Stagger your planting to stagger your harvest time
 - Starting seeds allows best use of limited bed-space
 - New plants are starting in pots while plants are maturing for harvest

- **Direct Seed vs. Transplant?**

- Direct seed – beans, “scatter” lettuces
- Seed or transplant – squash, cucumbers, melons, okra, broccoli, corn
 - Corn – does not self-pollenate, must plant close enough together to allow cross-pollination
 - Plant four(4) seeds in 2”x2” square (direct or transplant)
 - Plant this grouping 8”-12” away from other groupings
 - Best if same variety; cross-pollination between varieties can yield bad tasting results
- Transplant – tomatoes, peppers, “head” lettuces
- Starting seeds:
 - Cell-type trays
 - Fluorescent lights – NOT “growing” lights
 - Cool white and warm white tubes provide the necessary range
 - Heated growing mats (if your home is cooler than 72-degrees)
 - Transplant to larger containers as the plants grow (3-4 weeks):
 - Tomatoes like abuse so do not worry about hurting their roots
 - Squash, cucumber, melons do not like abuse, be gentle with their roots; they do not like to be root bound either!
 - Hardening – very important to get them acclimated
 - Start with 1-hour shade during the morning and again in the evening
 - Progress time daily for one week (or until transplant)
 - Transplant to the garden bed

- **Getting Started**

- Soil test, soil test, soil test
 - NOT University of Georgia (\$8)
 - Better is A&L Labs (www.alllabs.com) (~\$13)
 - Farmer D's
 - No matter which service, be sure to indicate organic, farming, raised-bed vegetable/herb garden
- Soil Amendments
 - Consider what you plan to grow
 - Tomatoes like calcium, magnesium and phosphorous, but NOT nitrogen and NOT acidic soil
 - Read the label; make sure you know what is inside the bag.
 - Read the label; dilute and disperse per the instructions (too much is just as bad as too little!)
 - Cow Manure is great, but must be aged/composted
 - Black Cow brand used to be sold at Home Depot; great product
 - MooNure – read the label; it is less manure and more tree/dirt filler; not great!
 - Chicken Manure – very high in phosphorus
 - Fish Emulsion – very high in nitrogen
 - Kelp/Seaweed – great for seed germination, soil conditioning
 - Lime – check the ph-level of your soil. If too acidic, add lime to the planting hole when you transplant
 - Bone Meal – good for tomatoes
- Fertilizing
 - Start of season
 - Rock powder (soft rock phosphate)
 - Potassium (green sand) – breaks up clay soil
 - Nitrogen – use fish emulsion and kelp
 - Every four (4) weeks
 - Foliar Spray plants for quick absorption
 - What is a Foliar Spray? Fertilizer or Pesticide is dissolved, then diluted further, in water, and directly applied with a hand sprayer. A large version is what your pest-control service uses; a smaller version is what we all use to mist our plants.
 - Always include liquid kelp!

- **Disease Control**

- Why some folks choose hybrids; they are more resistant
 - Hybrids, NOT genetically-altered plants
- Don't overcrowd your plants; air needs to circulate around stems and leaves
- Products
 - Actinovate – www.johnnyseeds.com - blight and mildew
 - Does not reverse, but it does halt the spread
- Always reapply after a heavy rain

- **Pest Control**

- Keep your eyes open!
- “Dispatch” quickly before they get out of control!
- Dilute, dilute, dilute – no matter what product you decide to use, start with a very weak dilution, then build up to full strength (if needed) until the pests are gone!
- Do not spray on a hot day; do not spray in direct sunlight; best to spray in the morning.
 - Hot/Sunlight – plants can be “burned”
 - Evening – wet plants are prone to mold/mildew/rot
- Aphids – usually the earliest offenders
 - Spray with water or a fatty-acid soap product
- Worms – Horned Tomato worms and other leaf-eating worms/caterpillars
 - Dipel Dust – natural bacteria
- Row Covers
 - Work great! Keep out just about everything!
 - Pull the covers back in the morning, to let the bees/butterflies help with pollination.
- Trap Cropping
 - Find out what the pest “likes” and grow that away from the garden.
 - Trap and dispatch as needed.

- **Trellises, Cages and Stakes**

- If you only have tomatoes, cages work
 - Make your own with “concrete re-enforcing cloth.”
 - 6”x6” openings in fence-like steel material; 5-foot wide
 - Always rusted; wear gloves
 - A 6-foot length, tied in a circle (zip ties, baling wire, etc), provides a 2-foot diameter circle, which is perfect for one tomato plant.
 - Use a T-bar fence post and zip tie the cage (home made or purchased) to the post for wind stability.
- If you have mixed plants, use trellises
 - Make your own with T-bar fence posts and electrical conduit connecting the posts
 - Gently tie your plants with muslin/cotton or cheesecloth strips; or
 - Use twine and graduate up the posts as the plants grow, capturing them gently between the successive levels of twine.
 - With tomatoes and cucumbers, place the tomato plants on either side of the trellis and plant the cucumber between them, at the base of the trellis. The cucumber will grow up the trellis between the tomato plants.
- Individual plant stakes
 - These work, but only one plant at a time
 - Gently tie your plant with muslin/cotton or cheesecloth strips
- IMPORTANT – Clean your trellis, cage and/or stakes after each season with a bleach-and-water mixture. Bacteria and disease can survive from one growing season to the next!!

- **Tomatoes, Tomatoes, Tomatoes and more Tomatoes**

- Caring for your plants
 - As you transplant them, plant them deeper than their current soil line; they will grow additional roots along the buried stem.
 - When you transplant them to your garden
 - Add a couple tablespoons of powdered lime to the planting hole
 - Add a couple tablespoons of Azomite® volcanic rock powder to the planting hole
 - Dip the root ball in liquid kelp (1-tbsp per gallon of water) with a trace of fish emulsion
 - mulch around their base to prevent “soil splash” onto lower leaves
 - Trim the lower limbs and leaves at least 12-inches above the ground, to prevent “soil splash” AND to promote good air circulation.
 - Blossom-end rot
 - Too much or too little water, or weather too hot
 - Usually temporary; fruit will be okay
- Pollination
 - Most tomatoes are self-pollinators
 - No need to distance your varieties
 - Less than 5% chance of cross-pollination
 - If this happens and the results are tasty, call Bill Yoder!
- Variety Successes or Failures
 - Brandywine – this DOES NOT THRIVE in Georgia
 - The air is too humid and too hot for the flowers to self-pollenate well
 - Heart-shaped (German Red Strawberry) – these are generally seedless
 - Great for people with diverticulitis, or trouble digesting seeds
 - Leaf type
 - Potato-leaf – hardier than their regular-leaf counterparts
 - More fruit production
 - Wispy-Wilty leaf – heart-shaped varieties
 - Look like they are dying, but they are not; fruit is great

- **Helpful Links**

- Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds – www.rareseeds.com
 - Seeds – vegetable, herb, flower, etc.
 - Books and tools
 - Informative catalog (downloadable pdf)
- Johnny's Selected Seeds – www.johnnyseeds.com
 - Seeds – vegetable, herb, flower, etc.
 - Tools
 - Amendments, Fertilizers and Pest Control
 - Actinovate – blight/mildew treatment
 - Prices geared toward larger farms
 - Work together to take advantage of better pricing
- Peaceful Valley Organics – www.groworganic.com
 - Seeds, Tools, etc – for organic gardening!
 - Seed starting tools
- A&L Labs – www.alllabs.com
 - Soil testing Service
- Azomite® - www.azomite.com
 - Where to buy and product information
- Bill Yoder – Yoder Farms
 - Produce and Seedlings Available at:
 - Marietta Square Farmer's Market
 - Marietta Square, Church Street
 - Saturday, opened April 3rd, no later than 9a-noon
 - Peachtree Road Farmer's Market
 - St. Philip's Church, Peachtree Street
 - Saturday, starting April 9th, 8:30a-noon
 - bryoder26@gmail.com