

Plant Fast-Growing Vegetables Now For Your Late Spring Dinner Table

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, March 27, 2020

Q: What are the fastest growing vegetables I can start growing right now?

A: Now is the perfect time to start many fast-growing vegetables. Many are also cool season vegetables that grow best in the spring or fall months when temperatures are not quite as hot.



The times given below are for plants started from seed but things can be sped up if you use plant starts.

ARS studies suggest that a moderate, 14-second dose of UV-B can boost fresh, sliced carrots' antioxidant capacity by about threefold. (Photo: Doug Wilson/USDA)

- Arugula grows in 30 to 40 days. Use as a peppery salad green or as a substitute for basil in pesto.
- Asian greens grow in 30 to 45 days. Harvest young for salad or grown longer for cooking greens.
- Beets grow in 40 to 70 days. Harvest early for greens or left longer to harvest roots.
- Broccoli Raab, Rapini grows in 40 to 60 days. Leaves, stems and flower buds are edible.
- Carrots grow in 36 to 55 days. Harvest them as baby carrots or let them grow to full size.
- Cress grows in 25 to 35 days. Use it to add peppery flavor for salads and sandwiches.
- Endive and escarole grow in 50 to 55 days. Sauté them in olive oil until evenly wilted for best taste.
- Kale grows in 30 to 65 days. Baby greens are tender and can be used in salads and smoothies.
- Kohlrabi grows in 37 to 45 days. It has a sweet crunchy flavor. Use in salads and stir fry.
- Leaf lettuce grows in 35 to 50 days. Harvest as baby greens or let it grow into larger leaves.
- Mesclun greens grow in 21 to 30 days. These are a mix of six to 10 seeds that grow fast.
- Mizuna grows in 25 to 45 days. Use the greens in salads or sandwiches.
- Mustard grows in 21 to 45 days. The spicy greens are great for stir fry or soup.
- Onion greens grow in 40 to 50 days. Harvest the greens, stalks or baby bulbs.

- Peas grow in 50 to 60 days. Pea shoots can be harvested earlier.
- Radishes grow in 21-30 days. The tops can also be eaten early. Radishes come in a lot of fun shapes and colors.
- Spinach grows in 30 to 55 days. Harvest baby greens for salads.
- Swiss chard grows in 30 to 60 days. Harvest the baby greens or let it grow for larger leaves.
- Turnips grow in 35 to 50 days. Both tops and roots can be eaten.

Growth rates vary by plant variety, so when choosing seeds, look for ones with shorter days to harvest.



Beets (Photo: Courtesy of ASAP)

Soil temperatures also make a big difference regarding how fast seeds germinate and plants grow. For cool season crops, the ideal soil temperatures are between 50 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit. Use plant cloches, cold frames or frost cloth to keep soil temperatures warmer and protect plants from any late frosts.

Many seeds can be planted in containers, which can be moved around to get the most sun, or brought inside at night to keep plants warmer. As

temperatures get hotter, containers can be moved into the shade to extend their growing season.



Turnips are a common root vegetable. Other easily recognized taproots include radish, parsnip, and carrot. (Photo: John Nelson)

If planted soon, most of these plants can be harvested before hot temperatures cause these cool-season vegetables to bolt (go to flower) or turn bitter. Many varieties can be grown into the summer if provided with some shade. Staggering seeding so that you plant every couple of weeks can extend your harvest and allow you to have small amounts of fresh vegetables over a longer period of time.

The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email mastergardener@shastacollege.edu. The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.