

Published July 16th, 2014

## Digging Deep-Gardening with Cynthia Brian From Seed to Shining Seed

By Cynthia Brian



Poppies and peppers grown from seed are kept moist and warm by a blanket of straw. Photos Cynthia Brian

area, break up the clumps of dirt, remove rocks and stones, rake two or three times. Plant in rows, squares, raised beds (easier on the back and for harvesting), in a 2 by 3 foot plot, containers, or mixed in your flowerbeds. Some of my most successful harvests have come from vegetables in my potager combination garden and even my pots.

Set out the seed packets that you want to grow. Read the label and the directions carefully to determine how many seeds to plant, how to space, and how deep. To save seeds and thinning waste, I use the minimum amount of seeds recommended, then follow up with more seeds a few weeks later for succession planting. Cover seeds to a depth of no more than three times their diameter.

Consistent watering is mandatory for germination. Some seeds have a tough outer shell that needs to be softened for up to 10 days with constant moisture. Other seeds (varieties of beans) must soak overnight in water before planting. In a drought year, planning a garden by seeding only may not be as cost effective as planting seedlings. Once the plants are established, you can cut back on the water schedule.

This year has been challenging with the variance in weather patterns - the daylight hours are scorching hot and by night the fog rolls in with its chilly sting. Just when we thought all danger of frost had passed, a freeze emerged. Since we don't know what the season has in store, I've learned to plant more than one variety as insurance, or you may elect to plant indoors first, then transplant later. When shoots emerge, add a top layer of straw to help maintain moisture and heat.

CHEAT SHEET for Cynthia Brian's Top 10 Direct Sow Vegetables

Temperatures, planting directions, germination, and harvesting may differ depending on your seed selection. Buy a reliable soil thermometer to eliminate the guesswork. If you have a particular date that you want to harvest, work the math backwards to determine your planting dates.

Legend: \*=Succession planting recommended

Arugula: Plant in soil temperatures of 50-60 degrees, 6 inches apart. Germinates in 7-10 days,

With your first bite of sweet white corn, a juicy garden ripe tomato, or a thirst-quenching mouthful of watermelon, there is no mistaking that summer has arrived. There is nothing better than going into the garden of eating pleasures! With all the hundreds of varieties of seeds available today, it's challenging to know what will work best in your unique micro-climate. When do you plant and how do you know when you'll be able to harvest? Since we can enjoy a cornucopia of edibles throughout the year, I'm providing notes on how best to direct seed to ensure an abundant harvest in any season.

My first rule of thumb is to survey your family to find out what everyone enjoys most. (And if your kids say doughnuts, let them plant cheerio seeds. When nothing grows explain to them that some years you'll get the doughnuts, but mostly you'll just get the holes!) The next step is to prepare your beds. To ensure a successful crop, choose a sunny area with well-drained, enriched soil. Weed the

edible within 40 days. \*

Beet: Plant in soil temperatures of 65-75 degrees, 6 inches apart. Germinates in 10-15 days, edible within 55 days. \*

Corn: Plant in soil temperatures of 65-75 degrees, 8 inches apart. Germinates in 4-10 days, 112 days until edible.

Kale: Plant in soil temperatures of 65-85 degrees, 24 inches apart. Germinates in 5-10 days, edible within 50-65 days.

Leek: Plant in soil temperatures of 60-65 degrees, 6 inches apart. Germinates in 5-10 days, edible 80-145 days.

Lettuce: Plant in soil temperatures of 55-65 degrees, 6 inches apart. Germinates in 7-14 days, edible in 45-70 days. \*

Pepper: Plant in soil temperature of 70-85 degrees, 12-18 inches apart. Germinates in 6-12 days, edible in 70-100 days.

Squash: Plant in soil temperatures 65-80 degrees. Hill 6 seeds, thin to 3 seeds per hill with hills spaced 48-72 inches apart. Summer squash is edible within 50 days, winter squash within 100 days.

Tomato: Plant in soil temperatures of 70-75 degrees, 36-48 inches apart. Germinates in 7-14 days, 70-90 days until edible.

Watermelon: Plant in soil temperatures of 70-85 degrees. Hill 6 seeds, thin to 3 plants per hill with hills spaced 72 inches apart. 4-10 days until germination, 110 days until edible.

Basil, chives, cilantro, dill, fennel, mustard, and parsley are easily grown from seeds. Pop a few seeds between your veggie plantings. To thrill children, let them plant radish and carrot seeds as they germinate quickly. For cucumbers, eggplant, oregano, sage, tarragon, thyme, and rosemary, I prefer to plant seedlings from small 2 or 4 inch pots. Cut greens daily for a never-ending salad of healthy feasting.

Sprinkle a palette of color into your landscape with these sure fire flower seeds:

Bachelor Buttons  
Blackeyed Susan  
Calendula  
Chinese Lantern  
Cosmos  
Forget-Me-Nots  
Hollyhocks  
Marigolds  
Nasturtiums  
Nigela  
Poppies  
Sweet Alyssum  
Sunflowers  
Zinnias

Planting by seed is easy on your wallet and relatively stress free. When the seed doesn't germinate, sow again. For instant gratification, experiment with the new "baby" varieties of crops that can go from seed to table within 40 days or so. If you are looking for a truly quick kitchen crop, grow sprouts. Add seeds to a small container of water and eat as the green shoots "sprout."

Sow, grow-vertical, horizontal, circular, or as a m $\heartsuit$ nage. From seed to shining seed-expect wonders!

Happy Gardening! Happy Growing  
Cynthia Brian-  
Cynthia Brian's Harvest List for July  
Santa Rosa plums  
Nectarines  
Tangerines

Peaches  
Kale  
Tomatoes  
Peppers  
Corn  
Squash  
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www.GoddessGardener.com  
I am available as a speaker, designer, and consultant.



When the flowers of Nigella fade, the dried pods can be popped open to spread the seeds in new beds.



Ruby Swiss chard and Italian parsley are ready to be harvested, while pole beans are climbing.



Yellow squash and zucchini are not only nutritious but beautiful as a table arrangement flanked by sunflowers and hydrangea blooms.



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