



# When to Plant in Illinois

Knowing when to plant for your area helps gardeners maximize the growing season. Planting dates are determined by the first and last frost dates as well as how long it takes for a crop to mature. There is also a difference for cool- and warm-season crops.

- **Cool-season crops** grow and develop best in early spring or fall temperatures. Some cool-season crops can withstand frost without damage, and some are even improved by experiencing a light frost. Examples: [Carrots](#), [broccoli](#), [turnip](#), and [radish](#).
- **Warm-season crops** do not grow well in lower temperatures and must be planted well after the average last frost date. Examples: [Tomato](#), [peppers](#), [winter squash](#), and [cucumber](#).

## Illinois Frost-Free Dates

Spring frost-free dates vary year to year. The Illinois State Climatologist has spring and fall frost maps based on temperature data from 1991 to 2020. Fall frost dates are also available for gardeners who grow cool-season vegetables. The maps are available on the [Illinois State Climatologist website](#) and can help gardeners determine when to plant.

## Regional Spring Last Frost Dates

The following spring frost-free dates are a general guide. These are the median dates for when the last 32-degree freeze occurred. Last freezes have occurred both before and after these time periods.

- Northern Illinois: April 8-29
- Central Illinois: April 8-15
- Southern Illinois: April 1-8

## Plant Hardiness Zones

The U.S. Department of Agriculture [Hardiness Zone map](#) helps growers better understand which perennial plants will survive a region's winter and thrive long-term. Most fruit and vegetable plants in Illinois, with a few exceptions, are annuals so the zones mostly apply to landscape plants.

Illinois has three hardiness zones and six subzones: 5a, 5b, 6a, 6b, 7a, and 7b. Due to the urban heat effect, the Chicago area has a warmer zone than the rest of northern Illinois.

## Crop Maturity

When to plant also depends on how long it takes a crop to mature. Always review plant tags and seed packets for how long it takes to harvest produce from the plant.

Northern Illinois has a shorter growing season than Southern Illinois. The average length of the growing season varies from 215 days in far southern Illinois to 180 days in far northern Illinois. Review the [Growing Season Length map](#) on the State Climatologist website.

## Fruit & Vegetable Planting Dates

Tables on the following pages provide suggested date ranges to plant vegetable seeds or transplants outside in Northern, Central and Southern Illinois. Always confirm plant dates with the seed packet or plant tag. When two dates are listed, the crop can be planted and harvested twice, for both a summer and fall crop.

## Contact Us

If you have questions, reach out to your nearest Illinois Extension office for a free gardening consultation. Find your local office at [go.illinois.edu/ExtensionOffice](http://go.illinois.edu/ExtensionOffice).

## Need a Hand?

Find more tips on home vegetable gardening online on at [extension.illinois.edu/gardening](http://extension.illinois.edu/gardening). Explore more gardening topics on any of these Illinois Extension websites.

- [Growing Herbs](#)
- [Fruit Trees for Home Gardens](#)
- [Small Fruits for Home Gardens](#)
- [Youth Gardening](#)
- [Growing Specialty Mushrooms](#)
- [Growing Pumpkins](#)
- [Composting](#)
- [University of Illinois Plant Clinic](#)

## Northern Illinois Planting Guide

Planting date ranges below are recommendations for Northern Illinois based on average first and last frost dates for this region. Always confirm plant dates with plant tags and seed packets. Note: Due to the urban heat effect, the Chicago area has a warmer zone than the rest of Northern Illinois and may be closer to Central Illinois dates.

| Vegetable          | Type               | Planting Date Range                         | Space Apart (Inches) | Sowing Depth (Inches) | Growing Instructions   |
|--------------------|--------------------|---|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Asparagus</b>   | Crowns             | April 1 to 30                               | 12" to 18"           | 6"                    | Spread roots and cover crown bud with 2 inches of soil; do not harvest first year; mow foliage after fall frost. |
| <b>Bean (bush)</b> | Seed               | May 24 to June 30,<br>July 30 to Aug. 14    | 2" to 4"             | 1"                    |  |
| <b>Bean (pole)</b> | Seed               | May 24 to June 30                           | 4" to 6"             | 1"                    |  |
| <b>Beets</b>       | Seed               | April 24 to July 30                         | 1"                   | ½"                    | Soak in water 24 hours before planting; thin seedlings to 2 inches apart.  |
| <b>Broccoli</b>    | Transplant         | April 24 to May 15,<br>July 15 to 30        | 12" to 24"           | ¼ " to ½"             |  |
| <b>Cabbage</b>     | Transplant         | April 24 to July 30                         | 12" to 24"           |                       |  |
| <b>Carrots</b>     | Seed               | April 24 to July 30                         | ½"                   | ½"                    | Mix with sand or soil to spread seed more evenly; keep moist during germination; thin to 1 inch.                 |
| <b>Cauliflower</b> | Transplant         | July 24 to Aug. 10                          | 18" to 24"           |                       |  |
| <b>Chard</b>       | Seed or Transplant | April 24 to June 14,<br>Aug. 1 to 14        | 2" to 4"             | 1"                    | Thin to 6 inches if seeded.  |
| <b>Corn</b>        | Seed               | May 15 to July 1                            | 12"                  | 1"                    |  |
| <b>Cucumber</b>    | Seed               | May 24 to June 30                           | 12"                  | 1"                    |  |
| <b>Eggplant</b>    | Transplant         | May 24 to June 30                           | 18" to 24"           |                       |  |
| <b>Endive</b>      | Seed               | April 14 to May 14,<br>Aug. 5 to 30         | Broadcast seed       |                       | Top dress with ¼ inch of soil; thin to 9 inches.   |
| <b>Garlic</b>      | Clove              | Mid-Sept.                                   | 2" to 4"             | 1" to 2"              |  |
| <b>Kale</b>        | Transplant         | April 14 to May 14,<br>Aug. 1 to 14         | 6"                   | ½"                    | Thin to 12 inches.   |
| <b>Kohlrabi</b>    | Seed               | April 8 to 20,<br>July 15                   | 4"                   | ½"                    |  |
| <b>Lettuce</b>     | Seed               | April 15 to May 15,<br>July 15 to Sept. 15  | Broadcast seed       |                       | Top dress with ¼ inch of soil; thin to 4 inches; consider shade for late plantings.                              |
| <b>Muskmelon</b>   | Seed               | June 3 to 24                                | 24"                  |                       |  |
| <b>Mustard</b>     | Seed               | April 15 to June 15,<br>July 15 to Sept. 15 | 4"                   | ½"                    |  |
| <b>Okra</b>        | Transplant         | May 24 to June 30                           | 12" to 24"           |                       |  |

## Northern Illinois Planting Guide (continued)

| Vegetable              | Type                            | Planting Date Range                      | Space Apart (Inches)       | Sowing Depth (Inches) | Growing Instructions                                  |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Onion (green)</b>   | Sets                            | April 9 to May 15                        | 2"                         | 1"                    |   |
| <b>Onion (bulb)</b>    | Sets                            | April 9 to May 15                        | 4"                         | 1"                    |   |
| <b>Parsnip</b>         | Seed                            | May 15 to Aug. 5 (fall crop)             | 3"                         | ½"                    | Thin to 18 to 24 inches.                              |
| <b>Peas</b>            | Seed                            | April 24 to May 15                       | 1"                         | 1"                    |   |
| <b>Pepper</b>          | Transplant                      | June 15 to July 30                       | 24"                        |                       |   |
| <b>Potato</b>          | Whole or 2 oz piece with 2 eyes | April 15 to 30                           | 12"                        | 2"                    |   |
| <b>Pumpkin</b>         | Seed                            | June 3 to 24                             | 36" to 72" (between hills) | 1"                    | 5 seeds per hill; thin to 2 or 3 best seedlings.      |
| <b>Radish</b>          | Seed                            | April 20 to June 15, Aug. 15 to Sept. 15 | 1" to 4"                   | ½"                    |   |
| <b>Rhubarb</b>         | Roots or Crown buds             | April 9 to May 30, Aug. 3 to 15          | 24"                        | 2"                    | Perennial crop.                                       |
| <b>Rutabaga</b>        | Seed                            | May 15 to Aug. 5 (fall crop)             | 2"                         | ½"                    | Thin to 6 inches when plants are 2 inches tall.       |
| <b>Spinach</b>         | Seed                            | April 5 to 30, Aug. 5 to Sept. 15        | Broadcast seed             |                       | Top dress with ½ inch soil; thin to 2 to 4 inches.    |
| <b>Squash (summer)</b> | Seed                            | May 24 to June 30                        | 24" to 36"                 | 1"                    | 2 seeds per hole; thin weaker seedlings.              |
| <b>Squash (winter)</b> | Seed                            | June 5 to 15                             | 72" (between hills)        | 1"                    | 4 seeds per hill; thin to 2 strongest seedlings.      |
| <b>Sweet Potato</b>    | Slips                           | May 24 to June 15                        | 12"                        |                       | Plant in raised ridge 8 inches tall.                  |
| <b>Tomato</b>          | Transplant                      | May 24 to June 15                        | 24 "to 36"                 |                       | Bury transplant up to bottom two leaves.              |
| <b>Turnip</b>          | Seed                            | May 15 to Aug. 5 (fall crop)             | 2"                         | ½"                    | Thin to 4 inches when plants are 4 inches tall.       |
| <b>Watermelon</b>      | Seed                            | May 24 to July 1                         | 48" to 72"                 | 1"                    | 3 to 4 seeds per hole; thin to 2 strongest seedlings. |

## Central Illinois Planting Guide

Planting date ranges below are recommendations for Central Illinois based on average first and last frost dates for the region. Always confirm plant dates with plant tags and seed packets.

| Vegetable          | Type               | Planting Date Range                   | Space Apart (Inches) | Sowing Depth (Inches) | Growing Instructions   |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Asparagus</b>   | Crowns             | March 15 to April 15                  | 12" to 18"           | 6"                    | Spread roots and cover crown bud with 2 inches of soil; do not harvest first year; mow foliage after fall frost. |
| <b>Bean (bush)</b> | Seed               | May 10 to June 15, July 15 to 30      | 2" to 4"             | 1"                    |  |
| <b>Bean (pole)</b> | Seed               | May 10 to June 15                     | 4" to 6"             | 1"                    |  |
| <b>Beets</b>       | Seed               | April 10 to July 15 (fall crop)       | 1"                   | ½"                    | Soak in water 24 hours before planting; thin seedlings to 2 inches apart.  |
| <b>Broccoli</b>    | Transplant         | April 10 to May 1, July 1 to 15       | 12" to 24"           | ¼ " to ½"             |  |
| <b>Cabbage</b>     | Transplant         | April 10 to July 15 (fall crop)       | 12" to 24"           |                       |  |
| <b>Carrots</b>     | Seed               | April 10 to July 15 (fall crop)       | ½"                   | ½"                    | Mix with sand or soil to spread seed more evenly; keep moist during germination; thin to 1 inch.                 |
| <b>Cauliflower</b> | Transplant         | July 10 to 20 (fall crop)             | 18" to 24"           |                       |  |
| <b>Chard</b>       | Seed or Transplant | April 10 to June 1, July 21 to Aug. 1 | 2" to 4"             | 1"                    | Thin to 6 inches if seeded.  |
| <b>Corn</b>        | Seed               | May 1 to July 9                       | 12"                  | 1"                    |  |
| <b>Cucumber</b>    | Seed               | May 10 to June 15                     | 12"                  | 1"                    |  |
| <b>Eggplant</b>    | Transplant         | May 10 to June 15                     | 18" to 24"           |                       |  |
| <b>Endive</b>      | Seed               | April 1 to May 1, July 21 to Aug. 15  | Broadcast seed       |                       | Top dress with ¼ inch of soil; thin to 9 inches.   |
| <b>Garlic</b>      | Clove              | October                               | 2" to 4"             | 1" to 2"              |  |
| <b>Kale</b>        | Transplant         | April 1 to 30, July 21 to Aug. 1      | 6"                   | ½"                    | Thin to 12 inches.   |
| <b>Kohlrabi</b>    | Seed               | March 25 to April 5, July 1           | 4"                   | ½"                    |  |
| <b>Lettuce</b>     | Seed               | April 1 to 30, July 1 to Aug. 31      | Broadcast seed       |                       | Top dress with ¼ inch of soil; thin to 4 inches; consider shade for late plantings.                              |
| <b>Muskmelon</b>   | Seed               | May 20 to June 10                     | 24"                  |                       |  |
| <b>Mustard</b>     | Seed               | April 1 to 30, July 1 to Aug. 31      | 4"                   | ½"                    |  |
| <b>Okra</b>        | Transplant         | May 10 to June 15                     | 12" to 24"           |                       |  |

## Central Illinois Planting Guide (continued)

| Vegetable              | Type                            | Planting Date Range                         | Space Apart (Inches)          | Sowing Depth (Inches) | Growing Instructions                                  |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Onion (green)</b>   | Sets                            | March 25 to May 1                           | 2"                            | 1"                    |   |
| <b>Onion (bulb)</b>    | Sets                            | March 25 to May 1                           | 4"                            | 1"                    |   |
| <b>Parsnip</b>         | Seed                            | May 1 to July 21<br>(Fall crop)             | 3"                            | ½"                    | Thin to 18 to 24 inches.                              |
| <b>Peas</b>            | Seed                            | April 10 to May 1                           | 1"                            | 1"                    |   |
| <b>Pepper</b>          | Transplant                      | June 1 to July 15                           | 24"                           |                       |   |
| <b>Potato</b>          | Whole or 2 oz piece with 2 eyes | April 1 to 15                               | 12"                           | 2"                    |   |
| <b>Pumpkin</b>         | Seed                            | May 20 to June 10                           | 36" to 72"<br>(between hills) | 1"                    | 5 seeds per hill; thin to 2 or 3 best seedlings.      |
| <b>Radish</b>          | Seed                            | April 5 to June 1,<br>Aug. 1 to 30          | 1" to 4"                      | ½"                    |   |
| <b>Rhubarb</b>         | Roots or Crown buds             | March 25 to May 15,<br>July 21 to Aug. 1    | 24"                           | 2"                    | Perennial crop.                                       |
| <b>Rutabaga</b>        | Seed                            | May 1 to July 21<br>(Fall crop)             | 2"                            | ½"                    | Thin to 6 inches when plants are 2 inches tall.       |
| <b>Spinach</b>         | Seed                            | March 25 to April 15,<br>July 21 to Aug. 30 | Broadcast seed                |                       | Top dress with ½ inch soil; thin to 2 to 4 inches.    |
| <b>Squash (summer)</b> | Seed                            | May 10 to June 15                           | 24" to 36"                    | 1"                    | 2 seeds per hole; thin weaker seedlings.              |
| <b>Squash (winter)</b> | Seed                            | May 20 to June 1                            | 72"<br>(between hills)        | 1"                    | 4 seeds per hill; thin to 2 strongest seedlings.      |
| <b>Sweet Potato</b>    | Slips                           | May 10 to June 1                            | 12"                           |                       | Plant in raised ridge 8 inches tall.                  |
| <b>Tomato</b>          | Transplant                      | May 10 to June 1                            | 24 "to 36"                    |                       | Bury transplant up to bottom two leaves.              |
| <b>Turnip</b>          | Seed                            | May 1 to July 21<br>(Fall crop)             | 2"                            | ½"                    | Thin to 4 inches when plants are 4 inches tall.       |
| <b>Watermelon</b>      | Seed                            | May 10 to June 15                           | 48" to 72"                    | 1"                    | 3 to 4 seeds per hole; thin to 2 strongest seedlings. |

## Southern Illinois Planting Guide

Planting date ranges below are recommendations for Southern Illinois based on average first and last frost dates for the region. Always confirm plant dates with plant tags and seed packets.

| Vegetable          | Type               | Planting Date Range                      | Space Apart (Inches) | Sowing Depth (Inches) | Growing Instructions   |
|--------------------|--------------------|--|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Asparagus</b>   | Crowns             | March 1 to April 1                       | 12" to 18"           | 6"                    | Spread roots and cover crown bud with 2 inches of soil; do not harvest first year; mow foliage after fall frost. |
| <b>Bean (bush)</b> | Seed               | April 26 to June 1, July 1 to July 15    | 2" to 4"             | 1"                    |  |
| <b>Bean (pole)</b> | Seed               | April 26 to June 1                       | 4" to 6"             | 1"                    |  |
| <b>Beets</b>       | Seed               | March 27 to July 30                      | 1"                   | ½"                    | Soak in water 24 hours before planting; thin seedlings to 2 inches apart.  |
| <b>Broccoli</b>    | Transplant         | March 27 to April 15, July 15 to 30      | 12" to 24"           | ¼ " to ½"             |  |
| <b>Cabbage</b>     | Transplant         | March 27 to July 30                      | 12" to 24"           |                       |  |
| <b>Carrots</b>     | Seed               | March 27 to July 30                      | ½"                   | ½"                    | Mix with sand or soil to spread seed more evenly; keep moist during germination; thin to 1 inch.                 |
| <b>Cauliflower</b> | Transplant         | June 27 to July 6                        | 18" to 24"           |                       |  |
| <b>Chard</b>       | Seed or Transplant | March 27 to May 15, July 7 to 21         | 2" to 4"             | 1"                    | Thin to 6 inches if seeded.  |
| <b>Corn</b>        | Seed               | April 15 to June 25                      | 12"                  | 1"                    |  |
| <b>Cucumber</b>    | Seed               | April 27 to June 1                       | 12"                  | 1"                    |  |
| <b>Eggplant</b>    | Transplant         | April 27 to June 1                       | 18" to 24"           |                       |  |
| <b>Endive</b>      | Seed               | March 15 to April 15, July 7 to Aug. 1   | Broadcast seed       |                       | Top dress with ¼ inch of soil; thin to 9 inches.   |
| <b>Garlic</b>      | Clove              | late October                             | 2" to 4"             | 1" to 2"              |  |
| <b>Kale</b>        | Transplant         | March 15 to April 15, July 7 to 18       | 6"                   | ½"                    | Thin to 12 inches.   |
| <b>Kohlrabi</b>    | Seed               | March 10 to 20, June 15                  | 4"                   | ½"                    |  |
| <b>Lettuce</b>     | Seed               | March 15 to April 15, June 15 to Aug. 15 | Broadcast seed       |                       | Top dress with ¼ inch of soil; thin to 4 inches; consider shade for late plantings.                              |
| <b>Muskmelon</b>   | Seed               | May 6 to 28                              | 24"                  |                       |  |
| <b>Mustard</b>     | Seed               | March 15 to April 15, June 15 to Aug. 15 | 4"                   | ½"                    |  |
| <b>Okra</b>        | Transplant         | April 26 to June 1                       | 12" to 24"           |                       |  |

## Southern Illinois Planting Guide (continued)

| Vegetable              | Type                            | Planting Date Range                    | Space Apart (Inches)       | Sowing Depth (Inches) | Growing Instructions                                  |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Onion (green)</b>   | Sets                            | March 11 to April 15                   | 2"                         | 1"                    |   |
| <b>Onion (bulb)</b>    | Sets                            | March 11 to April 15                   | 4"                         | 1"                    |   |
| <b>Parsnip</b>         | Seed                            | April 15 to July 7 (fall crop)         | 3"                         | ½"                    | Thin to 18 to 24 inches.                              |
| <b>Peas</b>            | Seed                            | March 27 to April 15                   | 1"                         | 1"                    |   |
| <b>Pepper</b>          | Transplant                      | May 15 to June 30                      | 24"                        |                       |   |
| <b>Potato</b>          | Whole or 2 oz piece with 2 eyes | March 15 to 30                         | 12"                        | 2"                    |   |
| <b>Pumpkin</b>         | Seed                            | May 5 to 25                            | 36" to 72" (between hills) | 1"                    | 5 seeds per hill; thin to 2 or 3 best seedlings.      |
| <b>Radish</b>          | Seed                            | March 20 to May 15, July 15 to Aug. 15 | 1" to 4"                   | ½"                    |   |
| <b>Rhubarb</b>         | Roots or Crown buds             | March 11 to May 1, July 7 to 14        | 24"                        | 2"                    | Perennial crop.                                       |
| <b>Rutabaga</b>        | Seed                            | April 15 to July 7 (fall crop)         | 2"                         | ½"                    | Thin to 6 inches when plants are 2 inches tall.       |
| <b>Spinach</b>         | Seed                            | March 11 to April 1, July 7 to Aug. 15 | Broadcast seed             |                       | Top dress with ½ inch soil; thin to 2 to 4 inches.    |
| <b>Squash (summer)</b> | Seed                            | April 28 to June 1                     | 24" to 36"                 | 1"                    | 2 seeds per hole; thin weaker seedlings.              |
| <b>Squash (winter)</b> | Seed                            | May 6 to May 15                        | 72" (between hills)        | 1"                    | 4 seeds per hill; thin to 2 strongest seedlings.      |
| <b>Sweet Potato</b>    | Slips                           | April 28 to May 15                     | 12"                        |                       | Plant in raised ridge 8 inches tall.                  |
| <b>Tomato</b>          | Transplant                      | April 28 to May 15                     | 24 "to 36"                 |                       | Bury transplant up to bottom two leaves.              |
| <b>Turnip</b>          | Seed                            | April 15 to July 7 (fall crop)         | 2"                         | ½"                    | Thin to 4 inches when plants are 4 inches tall.       |
| <b>Watermelon</b>      | Seed                            | April 28 to June 1                     | 48" to 72"                 | 1"                    | 3 to 4 seeds per hole; thin to 2 strongest seedlings. |

Modified May 2025