



## **ALABAMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM/ LIMESTONE COUNTY OFFICE**

**The Garden Spot  
For week of March 30, 2009**

### **It's Time for Cool-Season Vegetables**

If you've looked at the seed-supply or garden stores, you've seen lots of onion sets, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and other transplants. You've also probably noticed the seeds for the early spring vegetables. Ready or not, it's time (or past time) to get these cool-season vegetables in the ground and growing.

Garden vegetables can be divided into warm-season and cool-season vegetables. Cool-season vegetables require cool soil and air temperatures if they are to germinate, grow and mature with maximum yield and quality. They are shallow-rooted and thus are susceptible to drought. They are usually grown for their leaves or roots and respond well to nitrogen sidedressings.

In many cases, Cool-season vegetables may be grown as a spring or a fall crop. Follow package directions or call the Extension Office for specific dates on planting your vegetables. Most cool-season vegetables can withstand a light frost but will not tolerate a hard freeze.

Be sure you plant your seeds at the recommended time for our part of the country. Since many seed packets are marketed throughout the nation, be careful about planting dates. Keep in mind that there are even variations in planting times for Alabama: We do not have the same growing season in Limestone County (by the calendar) as gardens in Baldwin or Mobile Counties.

Remember that estimated days to first harvest, length of the harvest season and yield all are subject to considerable variation. The exact figures will depend on the varieties grown, the cultural procedure utilized, the weather and many other factors.

Insects are a problem on several of the cool-season crops. Aphids and worms are especially bad. Watch for them and control them as they appear.

Plant most cool-season vegetable seeds at a depth equal to approximately three times the seed diameter. Plant lettuce seed very shallowly, as it needs light to germinate. Planted seed must be kept moist if it is to germinate well.

Don't delay setting out your early spring vegetables. Many items, such as cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and lettuce, among others, simply do not tolerate the hot Alabama summers. Some vegetables will become bitter as temperatures increase.

Here are a few tips for early vegetables:

- ✓ Making multiple plantings of many of the more rapidly maturing cool-season vegetables will considerably extend the harvest season.
- ✓ Be sure to harden transplants of cool-season vegetables before they are planted in the garden. Lower the temperature at which they are growing a few days prior to transplanting.
- ✓ Support "Sugar Snap" peas on a tall trellis, as they frequently grow 6 feet tall.
- ✓ Cut potato seed pieces several days before planting them and fewer will rot.
- ✓ Harvest mature onions before it rains on them and dry them thoroughly to reduce rotting in storage. Store them as close to 40 degrees as possible.

If you have questions on home gardening or related topics, remember that the Limestone County Master Gardeners have a 'HelpLine' on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. They are highly trained and willing to help with your home gardening and home grounds questions. Their phone number is 232-5510 and they are located in an office at the Limestone County Extension Office at 1109 W. Market Street in Athens.

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