

Celery is another plant that, in our region, is transplanted into the garden. Celery (and celeriac) seeds require a fairly high (and fluctuating) soil temperature (18-21° C) to achieve a high germination percentage. They also require our entire growing season to reach maturity. Days-to-maturity noted on the seed packet is typically from transplant date. These seeds are also slow germinators, and could take as long as three weeks.

Celery is a tender plant and cannot handle frost. Do not transplant out until night-time temperatures do not fall under 13°C. Cool night temperatures will encourage the plant to bolt to seed prematurely and cause excessive leaf formation instead of the stalks you want. In order to encourage tall stalk growth, and stalk blanching, some gardeners place an opaque tube over the plant, forcing the celery to “grow to the light” at the top of the tube. Large pails with the bottom cut out, sauno tube sections, chimney sections, have all been successfully used to accomplish this.

Celeriac (celery root, European celery, turnip rooted celery) does not require blanching, since it is the bulbous root that is eaten. Celeriac is typically harvested when the root has reached at least two inches (5 cm) in diameter. Celery and celeriac prefer only slightly acidic soil (pH6.5-7) but will perform well in slightly more acidic soil (pH 6).

Zucchini is often referred to as summer squash. Zucchini and acorn squash are *large* bushy plants, and need to be allotted sufficient space in the garden. Regular zucchini is typically harvested when it is about 6-8 inches (15-21 cm) long. Zucchini matures in about 50 days. This does allow for direct planting in the garden. The seed does require fairly high soil temperatures to germinate (21°C), so it is often started indoors, and then transplanted out to the garden, so the harvest can be extended over a longer period. If it is the really large zucchini you are after, (for zucchini loaf, or for pickling) try waiting until near the end of the summer before leaving them on the plant to grow to that size. Harvesting the smaller zucchini regularly will encourage the plant to produce more. If the zucchini are left on the plant, production of that plant will slow. There are several types, or “shapes” of zucchini, including scallop (patty pan) and round. All are grown the same way, and the plants look alike.

There are plants too, that are best grown in their own space. Pumpkin, melon, watermelon and some squashes have vines that can really take over a small garden, choking out other plants, as well as spilling out over lawns etc. So...pick your spot carefully! Should you notice a particular vine heading off and growing in a direction that you do not want it going, move and redirect it immediately. If you wait until it has grown to some length, and then move it, it will ‘pout’, drop its’ blossoms, and come to a stand-still for a period of time. Since many of these can require close to 90 days to maturity from transplant, it is “growing time” you do not want to lose. Be mindful of the days-to-maturity of the various varieties, and choose a variety that will mature in our growing season if Mother Nature blesses us with a decent summer. Pumpkin, watermelon, melon (cantaloupe, honeydew) and squashes are tender crops, they love heat, and are NOT at all frost hardy. Do not transplant out until after the last Spring frost, and be ready to protect them from early frosts in the Fall. Cold nights or cool rainy weather, after they have started to bloom, will cause these vines to drop the blossoms before they would have had a chance to get pollinated. Also, do not grow ornamental gourds anywhere near squashes, they will cross pollinate, and cause deformed squashes.

If you want a large melon or pumpkin; wait until a nice one starts to grow on a vine, then remove any others that may form on the same vine; forcing that vine to put its’ energy into growing just one large pumpkin/melon. Vines are typically heavy feeders, and would benefit from rich soil with compost and rotted manure. Do not eat your freshly harvested winter squash right away. Store it at room temperature (20-23°C) for about 10 days to allow for some of the starches to convert to sugars. This makes for a much nicer tasting squash. They can then usually be stored at about 10°C for a couple of months if need be.

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