

Sowing/Planting and Harvesting Advice to Schools

1. Introduction - Working within the pattern of Terms

Careful planning is needed to ensure that the plants you grow are ready for harvesting during term time. This applies particularly to vegetables, as different vegetables take different lengths of time to reach maturity.

2. Getting an early start.

Some plants will be killed by frost so, if you want to get an early start you will need to sow some seeds indoors in trays or pots and keep them on the classroom window sill or in the greenhouse if you have one. Make sure they have plenty of light once germinated or they will become long with weak stems.

Buy seed compost for seed planting

Prepare the soil in the garden. Dig it over and add compost or bought plant food.

3. Sowing, growing and harvesting vegetables

It is useful to know how long different vegetable seeds take to germinate to avoid unnecessary worry that seeds are not going to grow and to realize that you just have to be patient. Remember, however, that germination is dependent on soil temperature and moisture so if the soil is very cold or dry seeds will germinate slowly or not at all.

It is also essential when gardening in school to plan your sowing so that you can harvest the crops in school term time. Here is a useful guide that should assist you with your planning.

Speedy crops can be ready for harvest in one term, 4 to 12 weeks (up to three months) after sowing or planting; radish, salad vegetables, lettuce, cress (indoors).

Medium to long term crops are sown or planted in one term to harvest, 12 to 25 weeks (three to six months) later.

See the next page for the planting/harvesting map.

Vegetables grown from seed - Blue = sow/plant Red = Harvest

Vegetable	Spring Term	Summer Term	Autumn Term
Beetroot	Sow seed outdoors	Harvest Sow seed outdoors	Harvest
Broad Beans	Harvest late Spring term or summer the next year		Sow outdoors in October
Broad Beans	Sow outdoors in Mar/April	Harvest in July	
Carrots	Sow outdoors in Mar/Apr	Harvest June/Jul	Harvest Sept/Oct
Courgettes	Sow indoors	Plant out in May/June	Harvest Aug/Sept
Early Potatoes	Plant after frosts	Harvest	
French Beans	Plant indoors in April	Plant out when no more frost expected May/June	Harvest in September
Garlic Cloves	Plant outdoors in October or Spring	Harvest autumn planted	Harvest spring planted
Leeks	Sow seed in Feb/March or plant in ground in March	Plant out when pencil thick	Harvest Nov to March
Lettuce	Sow every 2 – 3 weeks from early	Harvest	Sow Sep and Harvest
Mizuna	Sow seeds outdoors in March	Continue to sow and Harvest	Continue to sow and
Onions	Plant outdoors in Feb/March	Harvest October planted	Harvest Feb/March Plant in October
Peas	Harvest late Spring term or Summer term the next year		Plant in October or March/April
Radish	Sow every 2 – 3 weeks from early March	Continue to sow and Harvest	Sow Sep & harvest this term
Runner Beans	Sow indoors Apr/May	Harvest in July Sow outdoors June/Jul	Harvest September
Sweet corn	Sow indoors	Plant out in May	Harvest September

Strawberries are hardy plants and last for 2 – 3 years; **harvest June/July**

Raspberries are hardy plants; **harvest July/October** depending on variety. Best to grow autumn fruiting varieties which will fruit in August, Sept and Oct.

4. What needs protection?

You will need to protect seedling of the following from slugs and snails.

Lettuce, Cabbage, Runner beans.

You will need to protect the following from pigeons

Peas, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Broccoli, Swede, Peas and Sweet Peas Use a net

During the summer you will need to watch out for caterpillars on your cabbages. Squash the clusters of yellow eggs when you see them on the lower surface of the leaves. If you see the caterpillars take them off and dispose of them.

Aphids (Greenfly and Black fly) may attack your broad beans and runner beans. Greenfly may attack your lettuces.

5. Tips on watering including covering the holidays

Only small seedlings might need watering during the Easter holidays. A good watering on the last day of the Spring term might last through the holiday Children could take trays of seedlings home to look after during Easter holiday

Almost all plants planted in the soil will survive the one week summer half term if well watered immediately before the break. Some watering might be required if the half term is two weeks

Summer holiday watering is the most challenging to cover.

This need not be time consuming. A good soaking once a week during dry weather is much better than a light watering more frequently.

Parents who live locally might be able to help. Are there colleagues who would be prepared to come into school once during the summer holidays? If possible, organise a roster of friendly parents for watering duty.

Given some people's memory try to organise two parents for each week that watering might be required.

No watering required during the Christmas holiday.

Each school will need to make arrangements for access during the holidays. Security and health and safety issues should be dealt with in each school.

6. Flowering plants

Non hardy plants need to be protected from frost in the early spring and last only one year; these are known as annuals. Half Hardy annuals also need protection from spring frosts.

Some plants such as Wallflowers, Foxgloves, and Sweet Williams should be planted in one year to flower in the following year. These are known as biennials.

Hardy plants can survive frost and go on from year to year. These are called perennials some examples are snowdrops, crocuses, daffodils, irises, phlox, penstemons, peonies hardy geraniums, and most shrubs. Choose plants which flower at different times of the year.

7. Buy plants

If you cannot grow all flowers and vegetables from seed you can buy plantlets of many of them in local garden centres and nurseries ready for planting in your garden. These are often called "plugs"

NOTE:

I would welcome feed back on this advice on the basis of your experience. Also, I would welcome suggestions for other flowers or vegetables you find are interesting for children to grow.

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05:03:2016