

The Garden \$aver

April is here and is the month when things really get going in the garden. It hopefully feels like spring, with more settled and warmer weather. However, don't be in a hurry to plant those warm season crops. Frost can still occur in April! See more about warm season planting below. As always, feel free to be in touch with suggestions. Call or email Bill at 573-882-4973 or McKelveyWA@missouri.edu.

Ready for Warmer Weather

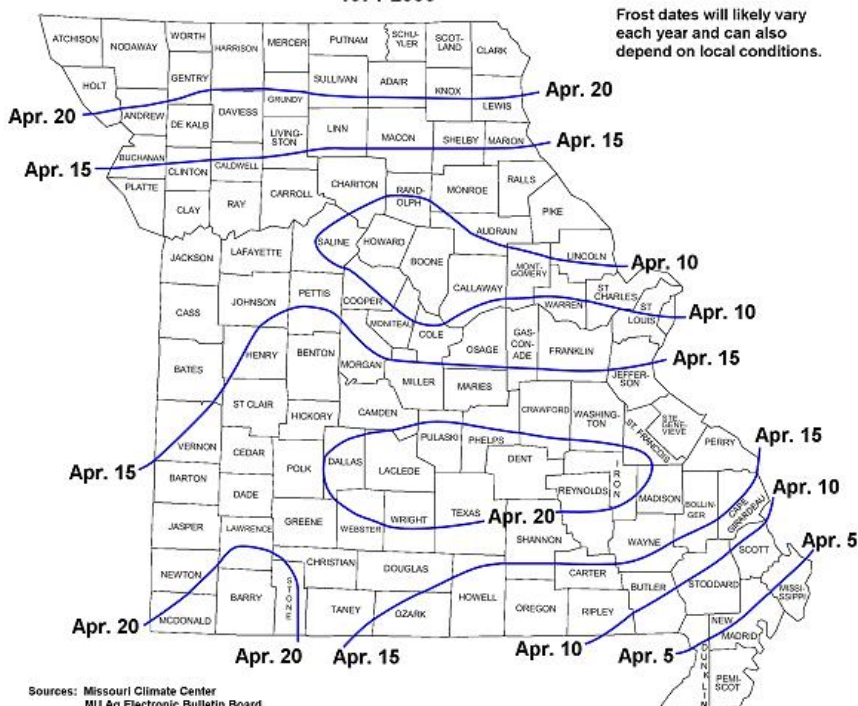
If your cool season crops didn't make it into the garden in March, never fear. Early to mid April is still a fine time to plant beets, broccoli, carrots, cabbage, greens of all types, peas, potatoes, radishes, and turnips.

As the weather warms in April, keep in mind that it is likely too early to plant beans, corn, cucumber, eggplant, melons, peppers, squash, tomatoes, and zucchini. Why?

1. The **soil temperatures** are likely too cool to allow your seeds to sprout quickly. If seeds sit in cool, damp soil too long they can rot or be eaten by critters.
2. Warm season crops are **sensitive to frost**, meaning that even a light frost can damage or kill most of them.

University of Missouri Extension tracks the **average day of the last spring frost** in Missouri. Keep in mind that this is the average – 50% of the last spring frosts occur after these dates. **Bottom line: Wait until early May to plant warm season crops.**

Average Date of Last Spring Frost ($\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$)
1971-2000



Soil

Good soil is the foundation of any garden. And sometimes, what we have to work with needs lots of help. Below are some tips for improving and caring for soil.

- **Don't work the soil when it is wet.** Test the soil for wetness by picking up some soil and making a soft fist. If the soil breaks apart when you poke at it, it is ready to be worked. If it stays in a clump, the soil is too wet. Give it some time to dry out.
- **Use compost** or well-aged manure whenever you can. Spread a 2-3 inch layer across the planting area and mix it in.
- **Reduce tilling.** Minor tilling or digging may be all that is needed to loosen the soil for planting. See what you can do by hand with a garden fork or hoe. You might be surprised by the results.
- **Do a soil test.** This can show if your soil nutrients are in balance, and what you need to do to fix it if they are not. Detailed instructions can be found here: <http://bit.ly/1HxzsdT>. Soil samples can be submitted through your county Extension office (<http://bit.ly/1C7TI49>) for a fee.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Growing Cabbage

Cabbage is related to many garden vegetables including broccoli, cauliflower, collards, kale, mustard, radishes, and turnips. In Missouri, transplants (starts or seedlings) are set out in late March to mid April for a harvest in late May or early June. It makes a good fall crop if you can find starts for planting in late July or early August.

You know when cabbage is ready to harvest by feeling the head – it will be very firm and not have any give, especially when you push on the top.

The main pest of cabbage and related crops is the cabbage worm. The little green worms come from white moths you will see flying around the garden. There are three main ways to control the worms: 1) pick them off with your hands, 2) use a natural product with *Bt* or *Dipel*, or 3) keep the moths off of the plants by using a floating row cover (<http://bit.ly/1DV1hOW>).



Cabbage worm damage on cabbage
Picture by R. Foster, Purdue University

More Small Plot Gardening

Growing in a small space or containers can still yield a good amount of food. It also gives you the chance to experiment and find out which crops do better in less space. People also tell us it is a great way to get children involved in gardening.

The right size: We've heard of people growing in 4 ft. by 4 ft. plots, in flower beds, in ½ whiskey barrels, and 5 gallon buckets. Use the space and materials you have on hand.

The right soil: If growing in the ground, use our tips on page 1 to get your soil in shape. If using containers, use a mixture of 1 part garden soil, 1 part compost, and 1 part sand. Straight garden soil will be too heavy and won't allow water to drain. Add some fertilizer and you'll be ready to go. Bagged potting mix can also be used.

Taste it at home!

Bill's Oil and Vinegar Coleslaw

ALL YOU NEED:

- 1 head of cabbage
- 1 large carrot
- 1 small onion
- 3 tablespoons olive or other vegetable oil
- 3 tablespoons vinegar (apple cider or wine vinegar, adjust to taste)
- Optional herbs – cilantro, parsley, dill, celery seed
- Salt, pepper and (optional) sugar

ALL YOU DO:

- Finely chop or shred all vegetables
- Mix in liquid ingredients and optional herbs
- Add salt and pepper to taste
- Add sugar if you'd like to add sweetness
- Experiment by including other vegetables and herbs from your garden



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