

Pennsylvania Planting Calendar

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Zone 6a — Western & Central PA
Pittsburgh · Harrisburg · State College · Allentown · Reading

2026

CROP	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
VEGETABLES												
Tomatoes			Start Indoors			Direct Sow / Transplant Out			Harvest Window			
Peppers		Start Indoors				Direct Sow / Transplant Out			Harvest Window			
Cucumbers				Start Indoors		Direct Sow / Transplant Out			Harvest Window			
Zucchini / Summer Squash				Start Indoors		Direct Sow / Transplant Out			Harvest Window			
Winter Squash & Pumpkins				Start Indoors		Direct Sow / Transplant Out				Harvest Window		
Green Beans					Direct Sow / Transplant Out				Harvest Window			
Sweet Corn					Direct Sow / Transplant Out				Harvest Window			
Broccoli & Cabbage			Start Indoors		Direct Sow / Transplant Out				Harvest Window			
Kale & Swiss Chard			Start Indoors									Harvest Window
Lettuce & Salad Greens			Start Indoors		Direct Sow / Transplant Out				Harvest Window			
Spinach			Direct Sow / Transplant Out		Start Indoors				Direct Sow / Transplant Out			Harvest Window
Peas			Direct Sow / Transplant Out						Harvest Window			
Carrots & Beets				Direct Sow / Transplant Out								Harvest Window
Onions		Start Indoors			Direct Sow / Transplant Out							Harvest Window
Potatoes				Direct Sow / Transplant Out								Harvest Window
Sweet Potatoes			Start Indoors				Direct Sow / Transplant Out					Harvest Window
Radishes				Direct Sow / Transplant Out					Direct Sow / Transplant Out			Harvest Window
HERBS												
Basil				Start Indoors			Direct Sow / Transplant Out					Harvest Window
Parsley		Start Indoors			Direct Sow / Transplant Out							Harvest Window
Cilantro				Direct Sow / Transplant Out					Direct Sow / Transplant Out			Harvest Window
Dill				Direct Sow / Transplant Out								Harvest Window
FRUITS & GARLIC												
Strawberries				Direct Sow / Transplant Out								Harvest Window
Blueberries				Direct Sow / Transplant Out								Harvest Window
Blackberries & Raspberries				Direct Sow / Transplant Out								Harvest Window
Garlic (fall-planted)												Direct Sow / Transplant Out

LEGEND: Start Indoors Direct Sow / Transplant Out Harvest Window

Timing calibrated for Western & Central PA. Garlic: plant Oct–Nov based on your county's first hard freeze. Succession crops (lettuce, spinach, radishes, cilantro) shown with spring + fall windows. gethandyoutdoors.com/pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Planting Calendar

Page 2: Indoor Seed Start Calculator | Zone 6a — Western & Central PA

YOUR LAST FROST DATE (avg)

May 5

Count back from your last frost date to find your ideal indoor start week.
 Dates below are target sowing dates for starting seeds indoors under lights.
 Adjust 1-2 weeks earlier if your space is cool; later if your space is very warm.

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CROP / PLANT	WEEKS before LFD	START DATE LFD = May 5	TIPS & NOTES
— VEGETABLES —			
Onions & Leeks	12 wks	Feb 10	Very slow grower — the earlier the better; thin to strongest seedling
Celery & Celeriac	10 wks	Feb 24	Soak seeds 24 hrs before sowing; needs steady warmth & moisture
Peppers	9 wks	Mar 3	Bottom heat (75-85 F) strongly recommended; slow to sprout
Eggplant	9 wks	Mar 3	Same timing as peppers; keep soil warm until germination
Tomatoes	7 wks	Mar 17	Harden off 7-10 days before transplanting outdoors
Broccoli & Cauliflower	6 wks	Mar 24	Cold-hardy — can transplant 3-4 weeks BEFORE last frost
Cabbage	6 wks	Mar 24	Cold-tolerant; transplant 2-3 weeks before last frost is fine
Sweet Potato Slips	6 wks	Mar 24	Root sweet potatoes in water to produce slips; needs warm spot
Kale & Chard	5 wks	Mar 31	Hardy; can transplant 2-3 weeks before last frost
Lettuce & Salad Mix	5 wks	Mar 31	Also direct-sow under row cover 4 weeks before last frost
Cucumbers	3 wks	Apr 14	Dislikes transplant shock — use biodegradable pots
Zucchini & Summer Squash	3 wks	Apr 14	Fast grower; direct-sow is equally effective
Winter Squash & Pumpkins	3 wks	Apr 14	Direct-sow is fine; only start inside if you have a short season
— HERBS —			
Parsley	8 wks	Mar 10	Slow germinator (2-4 wks); soak seeds overnight first
Basil	5 wks	Mar 31	Cold-sensitive — wait until after last frost to transplant outside
Cilantro	4 wks	Apr 7	Bolts quickly in heat; fall growing often more productive
Dill	4 wks	Apr 7	Transplant carefully — tap root is delicate; direct sow is easier

GERMINATION TIPS:

* Soil temp 65-85 F is ideal for most crops — a seedling heat mat makes a big difference.

* Keep seed-starting mix moist but not soggy. Cover trays with a clear dome until sprouts emerge.

* Once sprouted, provide 14-16 hrs of bright light per day. Grow lights 2-3" above seedlings prevent legginess.

* Harden off all transplants: set outside in a sheltered spot 7-10 days before planting in the garden.

Pennsylvania Planting Calendar

Page 3: Frost Date Reference | Average Last & First Frost by City

HOW TO USE THIS REFERENCE:

* "Last Frost" = avg final 32 F freeze in spring
(50% probability, NOAA 30-yr climate normals)

* "First Frost" = avg first 32 F freeze in fall.

* Season bar = frost-free growing window.
Microclimates vary — low areas freeze earlier.

CITY	COUNTY	LAST SPRING FROST (avg)	FIRST FALL FROST (avg)	DAYS	FROST-FREE GROWING SEASON											
					J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Zone 7a — Southeast PA					USDA Zone 7a											
Philadelphia	Philadelphia Co.	Mar 26	Nov 19	238	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from Mar 26 to Nov 19]											
West Chester	Chester Co.	Apr 8	Oct 30	205	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from Apr 8 to Oct 30]											
Doylestown	Bucks Co.	Apr 13	Oct 25	195	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from Apr 13 to Oct 25]											
Pottstown	Montgomery Co.	Apr 12	Oct 25	196	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from Apr 12 to Oct 25]											
Allentown	Lehigh Co.	Apr 20	Oct 20	183	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from Apr 20 to Oct 20]											
Bethlehem	Northampton Co.	Apr 20	Oct 22	185	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from Apr 20 to Oct 22]											
Zone 6a — Central & Western PA					USDA Zone 6a											
Lancaster	Lancaster Co.	Apr 22	Oct 18	179	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from Apr 22 to Oct 18]											
York	York Co.	Apr 25	Oct 15	173	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from Apr 25 to Oct 15]											
Reading	Berks Co.	Apr 18	Oct 22	187	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from Apr 18 to Oct 22]											
Harrisburg	Dauphin Co.	Apr 25	Oct 12	170	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from Apr 25 to Oct 12]											
State College	Centre Co.	May 3	Oct 5	155	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from May 3 to Oct 5]											
Pittsburgh	Allegheny Co.	Apr 29	Oct 12	166	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from Apr 29 to Oct 12]											
Zone 5a — Northern PA					USDA Zone 5a											
Erie	Erie Co.	May 8	Oct 22	167	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from May 8 to Oct 22]											
Williamsport	Lycoming Co.	May 5	Oct 10	158	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from May 5 to Oct 10]											
Wilkes-Barre	Luzerne Co.	May 8	Oct 7	152	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from May 8 to Oct 7]											
Scranton	Lackawanna Co.	May 10	Oct 5	148	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from May 10 to Oct 5]											
Stroudsburg	Monroe Co.	May 15	Oct 1	139	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from May 15 to Oct 1]											
Towanda	Bradford Co.	May 18	Sep 28	133	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from May 18 to Sep 28]											
DuBois	Clearfield Co.	May 18	Oct 2	137	[Bar chart showing frost-free period from May 18 to Oct 2]											

NOTES ON FROST DATES:

* Dates = 50% probability from NOAA 30-yr normals — actual dates vary year to year.
* Row covers & cold frames extend your season 2-4 weeks in both spring and fall.

* Low areas, valleys & frost pockets can freeze 2-3 weeks before nearby higher ground.
* Urban heat effect: city centers like Philadelphia are often 1-3 F warmer than suburbs.

Pennsylvania Planting Calendar

Page 4: Soil Temperature Cheat Sheet + Succession Planting Guide

SOIL TEMPERATURE GERMINATION GUIDE

CROP	MIN SOIL F	OPTIMAL RANGE F	GERMINATION TEMP RANGE (32-100 F)						
			32	50	60	70	80	90	100
— COLD-TOLERANT (sow when soil is still cool) —									
Peas	35	45–65							
Spinach	35	45–65							
Kale & Chard	40	50–85							
Lettuce & Salad Mix	40	60–65							
Radishes	40	65–85							
Carrots	45	60–70							
Beets	45	60–85							
Broccoli & Cabbage	45	65–75							
Onions	50	60–75							
— WARM-SEASON (wait until soil has warmed) —									
Green Beans	50	60–85							
Sweet Corn	55	60–95							
Cucumbers	60	70–90							
Zucchini & Squash	60	70–95							
Tomatoes	60	65–85							
Peppers	65	75–85							
Basil	60	70–85							
Sweet Potatoes	65	75–85							
Winter Squash	60	70–90							

Bar key: light shading = suboptimal (germinates slowly) | solid colour = optimal range

SUCCESSION PLANTING GUIDE

Stagger plantings to avoid all-at-once harvests and extend your season for weeks instead of days. Intervals shown are minimum spacing for continuous yield.

CROP	INTERVAL between sowings	TIPS & PA TIMING NOTES
Lettuce & Salad Mix	2–3 wks	Spring & fall only; skip summer heat <i>Pause Jun 1; restart mid-Aug</i>
Radishes	2 wks	25-30 days — fastest crop in the garden <i>Spring & fall only</i>
Spinach	2–3 wks	Sow until 4 wks before last frost date <i>Spring & fall rotations</i>
Green Beans	3 wks	3 sowings = continuous Jul-Sep harvest <i>Last sow: 8 wks before frost</i>
Beets	3 wks	Spring & fall; frost sweetens fall beets <i>Last sow: 8 wks before frost</i>
Carrots	3–4 wks	Spring + late-summer sow for fall storage <i>Fall sow = Aug for PA</i>
Cilantro	2–3 wks	Bolts fast in heat — keep re-seeding <i>Spring & fall only</i>
Peas	Once	One spring sowing, one fall sowing <i>Plant Mar-Apr & Jul-Aug</i>
Sweet Corn	2 wks	2-3 sowings prevents feast-or-famine <i>Sow May-Jun for PA</i>
Cucumbers	4 wks	2nd planting extends harvest season <i>2 successions for PA</i>

PRO TIPS FOR PENNSYLVANIA GARDENERS:

- * A \$10 soil thermometer is worth every penny — soil temp beats calendar dates every time.
- * Black plastic mulch raises soil 5-10 F — ideal for peppers, eggplant & sweet potatoes.

- * Row cover protects to 24 F and extends both ends of the season by 3-4 weeks.
- * Zone 5a/6a tip: plant beans, squash & cucumbers LATER — warm soil always beats a cold sow.

MY GARDEN NOTES
