

Vegetable Seed Varieties for Northern Gardens

All the catalogues referenced carry a huge selection of seed. The ones listed in this handout have been tested for reliability in local (Burns Lake, BC) growing conditions. JSS = Johnny's Selected Seeds (Maine, USA) WD = William Dam Seeds (Dundas ON) VS = Veseys Seeds (Charlottetown, PEI) WCS = West Coast Seeds (Vancouver, BC)

Note: Number of days inside brackets eg. (100 days) is a guide to the number of days to maturity from planting out. Helps to determine when a variety is available for eating; early, mid season, or late season.

Broad Beans - Sow direct outdoors as soon as soil is warm 4-6" apart. Stake with willow branches.

Broad Windsor (85 days) - WCS
Witkiem (70 days) - sow a few plants so you can experience tender green fat beans sautéed in bacon fat. WD

Bush Beans - Sow direct around Father's Day 4-6" apart. Needs air circulation around plant to keep pods from moulding. Do not soak seed. Use a soil inoculant (see tips).

Provider (50 days) - carries pods up high JSS,WD, VS
Goldrush (45 days) - good for freezing WD
Tri-colour Blend (50-60 days) - green, yellow, purple. For longer harvest period. Good value for 150 seed package. WCS

Runner Beans - Sow direct around Father's day. Needs support to climb.

Dragon Tounge (57 days) - half runner (shorter) heirloom with superior flavour, flat podded. JSS
Scarlet Runner (65 days) - eight feet tall with red flowers. Great in the greenhouse to attract pollinators. VS,WCS

Beets - single seed is a capsule with potential for 3-5 plants. Space seed at least 2" apart.

Red Ace (50 days) - best all round beet. JSS, VS, WCS
Detroit Supreme (60 days) - main or fall crop for storage not recommended for baby beets. WD, VS, WCS
Cylindra (60 days) - long 2" diameter pickling or freezing. JSS,WD, WCS
Touchstone Gold (55 days) - beautiful colour and flavour. JSS, WD, WCS
Chiogga (55 day) - candy cane stripes. JSS, WD, VS, WCS

Brussel Sprouts - Sow for transplanting out 6 weeks before planting date (third week in May ?). 12 plants is lots for Thanks Giving dinner and to share. Space plants 24 " apart.

Jade Cross (95 days) - nice big sprouts. WD

Broccoli - Sow for transplanting out 6 weeks before planting date. Avoid early types as our unsettled spring weather interferes with head formation. Look for varieties known to produce lots of side shoots once the main head is harvested.

Arcadia (63 days) - mid to late maturity. Tolerant of cold stress. JSS
Belstar (67 days) JSS,WD
Gypsy (70 days) JSS,WD
Patron (60 days) - 6" heads followed by vigorous side shoots until freeze up. VS
All Season Blend - blend of early, mid and late maturing varieties for continuous harvest. VS, WCS

Cabbage - Sow for transplanting out 6 weeks before planting date. Lightly steam early types and sprinkle with caraway seed. Fresh cabbage cooks very quickly <20 minutes. Transplant larger types at least two feet apart.

All Season Blend - blend of early, mid and late maturing varieties, includes reds and pointed varieties. VS
Early Jersey Wakefield (65 days) - small pointed 2 lb heads. A true heirloom, this variety has been continuously available in North American Seed Catalogues since the late 1800's. WD, WCS
Golden Acre (70 days) - Larger loose heads with soft leaves for fresh eating, resists splitting when mature. WD
Lennox (100 days) - 6 lbs tight, hard heads for storage or sauerkraut. WD, VS, WCS

Red Acre (80 days) - excellent sweet flavour for sautéing or salads. WD

Cauliflower - *Sow for transplanting out 6 weeks before planting date. Transplant about 18" apart. Avoid early types as they will often bolt. Chose a mid and a late season variety in order to extend the harvest period. When Cauliflower is ready it does not stand -- eat it now! Fold over leaves once the heads start to form to keep them from discolouring in the light.*

Amazing (75 days) - white, late summer. JSS, WD, WCS

Cheddar (80 days) - A novelty variety with orange heads due to high levels of beta-carotene. Reliable in our climate even when the white varieties are struggling. WD, VS

Symphony (75 days) - great for late summer. VS

Multi Colour Blend (70-80 days) - Orange, Green, Purple heads. Makes a beautiful veggy tray. WCS

Carrots - Direct seed when soil is warm enough. Make sure the seed bed is well prepared - no sticks or stones. Plant at least 4 rows 4 inches apart to create a moist environment and a closed canopy to suppress weeds. Very important for germination to keep soil moist until you see shoots in about 14 days (takes quite a while to come up). To eliminate the chore of thinning use pelleted seed and some kind of hand seeder. Ideal pellet spacing is 1" apart. At least 20% of the seed will not germinate. Use fresh seed each year to prevent crop failure. For an early treat sow some short rows in your greenhouse in mid April.

Nelson (59 days) - fresh eating. JSS (pelleted) WD, WCS

Bolero (75 days) - stores well in plastic bags in the fridge. JSS (pelleted), WD, VS (pelleted), WCS

Yellowstone (75 days) - dark yellow roots, excellent cooked flavour, looks beautiful on the plate. WD, WCS

Rainbow (75 days) - fresh eating. Strong tops make it easy to pull up. JSS (pelleted), WD, VS, WCS

Corn - Sow in deep pots (beer cups) around the beginning of May. Transplant into greenhouse or outside in a sheltered location when the plants are about one foot high (four leaves). Transplant into closely spaced blocks about 1 foot by 1 foot between plants. Avoid long single rows. This improves pollination. If planted outdoors protect with a wind barrier of plastic fence or polyester fabric about one metre high to create a heat trap. This can be removed in July.

Mairai 130 (75 days) - Supersweet variety, great combination of tender, sweetness, and fresh storage in the fridge for one week. VS

Cucumber - Sow in 4 " pots around the beginning of May for transplanting into the greenhouse at the two leaf stage (3 weeks). Do not delay transplanting or grow too long in pots to prevent transplant stress.

Greenhouse Climbing

Sweet Success (48 days) WD

Sweeter Yet (45 days) - long English, VS, WCS

Diva (58 days) - slicing, can be field grown JSS

Carmen (60 days) - huge plants, long English greenhouse. Keep separate from other varieties to avoid cross pollination. VS, WCS

Pickling Cucumbers

Northern Pickling (48days) - high yielding, early, old favourite. JSS

Garlic - plant cloves 6-8" deep and 12" apart in late October. Garlic seed is very expensive at around \$25.00/lbs plus shipping - approx.. 6 bulbs to a pound. Look for hardneck garlics from the porcelain strains with their distinctive purple stripes. Softneck garlic is not suitable for this climate. BEWARE OF WHITE ROT. You can't detect this fungus from looking at the bulbs. Only the grower can tell you if the parent plants were suffering. Once this fungus takes hold in the soil you will never be able to grow garlic, onions, or leeks again. Ready for harvesting in early August depending on how wet and cold the summer has been.

Music - WD, WCS, VS

Red Russian -WCS

Oriental Vegetables - Sow indoors early (beginning of April) for transplanting into the greenhouse or a cold frame. Ready for eating in as little as 30 days from planting out. No comparison in quality or taste to what is available in the grocery aisle. Excellent early vegetables for our climate. Plants them early in the spaces set aside later for tomatoes or cucumbers. Not suitable for outdoor planting as flea beetles love them. Needs short days to trigger maturity. Must be planted and eaten before the spring equinox (May 21st).

Joi Choi (50 days) - classic Bok Choy used in stir fries or raw in salads. WD, WCS

Ming Choi (40 days) - dwarf pak choi. WD, WCS

Monument (75 days) - Chinese Cabbage. WD

Blues (57 days) - small Chinese Cabbage that is bolt resistant. WD

Tatsoi (45 days) - used for cooking and as a salad green. Very high vitamin content. JSS, WD

Kale- Sow for transplanting out 6 weeks before planting date.

Black Magic (45 days) - dinosaur or sea kale suitable for steaming. WD, VS

Lacinato (65 days) - sea kale. WCS

Redbor (50 days) - intense dark colour, very low germination rates, fabulous foliage plant in the flower garden. WD, VS, WCS

Red Russian (50 days) - leaves are tender compared to other varieties. JSS, WCS

Lettuce - Sow for transplanting 4 weeks from planting out. Transplant 12" apart for best head formation.

Edox (55 days) - A soft butter head lettuce with pale green inner leaves, bronze outer leaves. Tasty with oil and vinaigrette dressing. WD, VS

Cimmaron (60-70days) - softer, red leaf, heirloom romaine. WCS

Green Forest (70 days) - A romaine head lettuce with unbelievable yield and performance. JSS, WD, VS

Little Gem (70 days) - mini, personal sized heads of romain. Tender blanched inner leaves. WCS

Nevada (48 days) - batavia or summer crisp type, resists, tip burn, bottom rot and bolting. JSS

Yucaipa (70 days) - Real ice berg lettuce grown in living soil (not hydroponic - not grown under artificial lights) has incredible flavour and texture. WD, VS

Onions – Sow for transplanting eight to ten weeks before planting out. Recommend using a plug tray or very small cell packs. Onions are biennials. They form small bulbs the first year and set seed the second growing season. Planting onion sets (small bulbs) usually results in plants with thick woody necks to support the seed head that don't cure well. Onion bulbs form in response to day length. Choose seed varieties that are labelled "long day" or "intermediate or day neutral". Buy fresh seed each year.

Norstar (90 days) - long day, very successful main storage crop. WD, VS

Ailsa Craig (95 days) – open pollinated, day neutral, sweet onion with mild flavour. Huge bulbs that will cover a piece of bread when sliced. JSS, WCS

Super Star (100 days) – day neutral, sweet white onion, not suitable for storage. Excellent cooked or raw in salads. VS

Red Wing (118 days) – long day, sorry not for storage here, adaption to 35 – 55 degrees latitude. JSS, WCS

Peas – direct seed into the garden once the soil is warm and dry. Use inoculant to kick start the nitrogen fixing process. Plant peas in a broad band at least one foot in width. Pea seeds planted 1" apart in multiple rows mimics how this species would grow in nature. Put up your pea fence immediately.

Green Arrow (75 days) – 9-11 peas per pod. Very consistent. VS, WCS

Oregon Sugar Pod (63 days) – a snow pea for eating the shell and all in stir fries and oriental dishes. WD, WCS

Super Sugar Snap (66 days) – Shorter growth habit. Full sized fleshy pods that have reduced strings – top em' tail em' and lightly cook and eat them up, pod and all. WD, WCS

Peppers – Sow seeds around Valentines Day (mid February) eight to ten weeks before transplanting into the green house. Do not transplant into the greenhouse until you can be sure that nights are at least 10 C.

Ace (50 days) – works well in cool climates. JSS
California Wonder (76 days) – nice thick fleshy walls. WD, WCS

Hungarian Hot Wax (65 days) – high yielding plants for canning. JSS, WD, VS, WCS

Potatoes – Direct planting into the garden when the soil is warm enough. If you have

space and an early variety like 'Warba' or 'Eramosa', try them in pots in the greenhouse for late June eating. There are something like 200 potatoe varieties available in North American and just seven kinds sold in the grocery store.

French Fingerling – late season, pink skinned, red and white flesh, best boiled or roasted.

Kennebec – mid season, all purpose, long storage, large blocky potato.

Sieglinde – smooth, yellow flesh, good for mid season eating and long term storage, scab resistant.

Yukon Gold – mid to late season, yellow flesh, low yielding.

Russet Burbank – late season, netted skin, dry white flesh for baking. Long storage.

Pumpkins – Sow seed for transplants around May 1st. Transplant outside June 1st through black plastic mulch or landscape fabric to control moisture, trap heat and keep fruit clean. Protect with a barrier if your garden is windy.

Racer (85 days) – for Halloween pumpkins, not for storage or pies. JSS, VS

Rocket (86 days) – another good northern Jack O'Lantern. VS

Winter Luxury Pie (105 days) – dry flesh for pies and long storage. JSS

Summer Squash – Sow seed for transplants around May 1st. Transplant outside June 1st through black plastic mulch or landscape fabric to control moisture, trap heat and keep fruit clean. Protect with a barrier if your garden is windy.

Costata Romanesco (52 days) – Italian heirloom with the best texture and flavour, large green and white striped fruits. JSS, WCS

Magda (48 days) – Lebanese cousa type with superb flavour. JSS, VS

Raven (42 days) – classic dark green. JSS, WD, WCS

Sunburst (50 days) – bright yellow saucer shape. Not heavy producers so you will need at least 2 plants. WD, VS, WCS

Yellow Crookneck (58 days) – buttery firm texture great for grilling. JSS, WCS

Summer Surprise Mix – dark green, yellow, light green and striped varieties. 15 seed/Pkg. VS

Patty Pan Blend – mixture of 3 different coloured varieties for long harvest. WCS

Winter Squash – see directions for summer squash installation. Chose varieties of Pepo Maxima (Kabocha types) that mature in under 95 days. Pepo moschata (Butternut types) require more heat units than our summers usually provide.

Pinnacle (85 days) Spaghetti type. Semi bush for smaller spaces.

Small Wonder (90 days) – Small personal sized spaghetti squash. Large spreading vine. WCS

Sweet Mama (85 days) – Kaboch type, produces 2 or 3 4lb fruit per plant. Long storage. JSS, VS

Radish - direct sow very early.

Cherry Belle (25 days) – old time favourite. VS

Easter Egg Mix (30 days) – white, pink, red and purple. JSS, WD, VS, WCS

Summer Cross (50 days) – Oriental Daikon radish remains edible for longer period of time. JSS, WD, VS, WCS

Spinach - Direct sow very early (April) into the greenhouse or the garden. Can also be sown as a transplant. Must be harvested before the days get long or it will bolt. For freezing or cooking try New Zealand spinach.

Space (45 days) - dependable. VS, WCS
Tetragonia Expansa - New Zealand Spinach is a spinach like green with leaves that can be picked throughout the season. Heat and bolt resistant plants that spread about 1X3 feet. Sow about 6 weeks before planting out. Germinates slowly. Harvest plant tips which quickly resprout. WD

Swiss Chard - Direct sow into the garden. Or try some as transplants for early (April) greenhouse production.

Bright Lights - mixture of stalks of yellow, pink, white and red, with dark green leaves. JSS, WD, VS, WCS

Tomatoes - Far too many varieties for listing. Tomatoes are very labour intensive. Determinate = bush varieties. Indeterminate = vine type. All types need vigorous pruning for best results.

Cobra (70 days) - heavy yielding, greenhouse variety. VS

Early Cascade (60 days) - vining with masses of bright red fruits. WCS

Grightmires Pride (65 days) - Indeterminate early, pinkish-red heart shaped. Smooth flesh, best for sandwiches. Reliable. WD

Manitoba (70 days) - Non staking bush type, very productive. WCS

Taxi (64 days) - Determinate, meaty baseball sized bright yellow with sweet flavour. Reliable JSS

Sun Gold (57 days) - vining, cherry tomato with intense flavour. Memorable. JSS

Turnips - Direct seed when soil is warm. Rutabagas have the highest calcium content of all root crops. Long storage at the right temperature. Try cooked with carrots and mashed together.

Helenor (90 days) - smaller tuber size, smooth, uniform, long storage. WCS

TIPS

Don't try to plant too early. Wait until the soil is dry enough and warm enough that weed seeds are germinating. Depending on your elevation, aspect, soil type, micro site, and the

kind of weather patterns we are experiencing at the time this can be from the middle of May to the middle of June.

Cultivate your soil a couple of weeks ahead of planting. Cultivating it again shallowly (<4"); once you see weeds germinating and just before you plant, can reduce the weed load by as much as half. This very traditional technique is called "stale bedding".

To test germination rates in old seed packages. Place 10 seeds on a folded up, damp paper towel in a small plastic bag. Write the variety name and the date on the plastic bag. Put it in a warm place with a reasonable amount of light. The top of the fridge works well. One week later count how many seeds have germinated eg. 8 out of 10 seeds would be 80% germination. Another technique with older seed saved from the previous year is to sow 2-3 seeds in each pot. If too many germinate then cut the extras off.

Extend the availability of your vegetables by planting early, mid and late season varieties together. Or in the case of lettuce try succession planting; Sowing seeds approximately every two weeks. Another strategy is to plant transplants at the same time you do some direct seeding.

All pea and bean seeds benefit from treatment with seed inoculant. This is a fine powder composed of beneficial bacteria (called rhizobia) that kick-start the nitrogen-fixing process. Make sure to keep the inoculant package cool as it contains a living organism. Store it in the door of your refrigerator. Avoid buying inoculate that has not been kept cool at a constant temperature.

When transplanting broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, or any member of the brassica family. Plant them deep at least 2-3 inches above the surface of the transplant soil. This helps prevent the plants from tipping over when they get larger or catch the wind during a storm.

Raw carrot seeds are small and stick together, and require labour intensive thinning later on. Pelleting the seed with a clay coat makes planting a single seed easier. It is easier to achieve the correct spacing for well-shaped carrot roots. The clay absorbs moisture aiding in germination.

Seed Planting Schedule

8-10 weeks from planting out
Onions, Peppers, Tomatoes

6 weeks from planting out
Broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, Cabbage,
Cauliflower, Kale, Lettuce, Oriental Vegetables

4 weeks from planting out
Corn, Cucumbers, Summer & Winter Squash,
Pumpkins

Direct Seeding
Beans, Beets, Carrots, Peas, Potatoes,
Radishes, Spinach, Swiss Chard, Turnips

Fall Planting
Garlic