



*And the bush hath friends to meet him, and their kindly voices greet him  
In the murmur of the breezes and the river on it's bars,  
And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,  
And at night the wond'rous glory of the everlasting stars.*

– Banjo Paterson

It is awe inspiring to think that our little patch of land is really still part of the bush.

**Welcome to [vegetableseeds.net.au](http://vegetableseeds.net.au)**

**January 2015 Newsletter**

Happy New Year and welcome to [www.vegetableseeds.net.au](http://www.vegetableseeds.net.au) January 2015 Newsletter.

In life, try to schedule your priorities, not prioritise your schedules.

This month you can see the revised sowing guide for cool climate Tasmania and similar climates in Australia. If you follow it and you sow our seeds at the suggested dates you will produce dependable crops most years, even with fluctuations in local weather conditions.

If you have warmer microclimates, near a river or coastal area with a warm early spring, or colder inland, mountainous areas with a cold late spring you can probably sow seeds outside of these suggested sowing dates and by keeping your own sowing dates get to know your own garden well. Seed is usually direct sown because it produces strong root systems and fast growing plants. Many of our customers prefer sowing in punnets for transplanting but the following do not transplant well; carrots, turnips, radish, parsnips and swedes because their fragile root can get damaged. Chinese cabbage can bolt to seed when transplanted all these are better direct sown.

## Seed or Punnets?



The sowing guide refers to direct sown seed unless otherwise mentioned. Punnets grown seedlings have some advantages over direct sowing, waterlogged soils will rot seeds, cold or very hot dry soils delay seed germination, and small seedlings cannot compete with vigorous weeds and pests if you do not have time to control them. Whereas hardened off strong seedlings transplanted from punnets obviously already look like plants you can see where you plant them and do weeding, spraying for pests, and feeding around them, but they must be planted out at the right time and watered in well.

Seed packets often have many seeds but most home gardeners just want a few plants in a punnet. Punnets sown seeds are generally prepared two weeks to a month or so before direct sowings so getting the timing right is important. Some failures are inevitable, think of a farmer who invests his whole year in a crop and then it gets wiped out by a single severe weather event, we home gardeners don't have much to worry about.

## Older newsletters

Please cross reference with all the other previous newsletters regarding the growing information for individual crops. One last thing this to remember this guide is based on our seeds, please remember that not all seeds are for cool climates many varieties perform very differently when sown at different times.

## Sowing guide and information\*

### January



Plant seedlings from your own transplants grown from our seeds sown in punnets in December of Brussel sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, broccoli, purple sprouting broccoli (for winter )and kale. Brassica seedlings like their roots firmed into the soil. Produce will mature in Autumn early winter.

Sow parsnip seed now, it must be fresh strong seed, after sowing it can take three weeks to germinate and must not dry out, some folk place a board over the freshly sown seed to keep the soil moist and

remove it when the first seeds germinate, they do the same with carrot seed.

Sow carrots, most lettuces except icebergs (these can bolt), silverbeet, swedes in warmer areas as they may not form large roots by winter if sown in colder areas now. Sow white lady Japanese turnips and black Spanish radish.

Plant out transplanted leeks at pencil thickness sown from seed in October they will be large and sweet by late autumn/winter

### February

When most summer crops have been harvested dig in mushroom compost, COF etc. Sow Chinese cabbage and Pak choi, protect seedlings from slugs and snails, which unchecked will destroy them. Sow Japanese white lady sweet turnips. Last chance end of month for beetroot, the root growth slows down as we approach autumn. Sow spring Hero cabbage now. Sow Iceberg lettuce now.

### March

Sow Chinese greens, and coriander it could go to seed if sown any sooner. If soil is still warm attempt lettuce, carrots for winter storage, spring onions,

Sow green manures such as annual lupins, non-invasive annual black oats, tic/field beans, serratas, mustard seeds.



Sow broad beans for harvest in October/November especially paramo, coles dwarf, early longpod and witkiem which like cold winters.



## April

Autumn sown green manures like Lupins, tic beans, mustards and non-invasive black oats, broad beans

End of month sow our autumn sown brown and red onions now ready for harvest in December/January.

Plant our garlic variety now this will mature in late December/ January.

## May

Plant red, golden and brown shallots, potato onions and garlic. Continue sowing broad beans coles dwarf, early long pod, witkiem, paramo, red epicure, purple flowered. Continue sowing green manures. If your soil is waterlogged and cold delay sowing or planting, you have a few weeks yet for these crops.

Sow our autumn sown red onions and brown onions, the sowing time slot for these varieties is from late April to lateMay.

Purchase seed potatoes from now until August but in colder areas do not plant until soil dries out a bit and warms up and at least three weeks before you expect your last frost, you can then plant right up to Christmas.

As an example plant early varieties (like pink eyes firs) for December/January and main crop varieties like king Edward for January/March. Some home gardeners plant early, mids and main crop all at the same time. In frost free areas you can grow them outside of this timeframe but remember day length affects the rate of top growth and so the tuber development too.



## June

Add bulky organic matter like mushroom compost, sheep or cow manure and complete organic fertiliser, ready for spring sowings. Select seeds and draw up a sowing plan.

Leave an area fallow for a year to let the soil recover from over production.

You may find tomato plants available in shops from late June throughout winter, my advice is do not purchase them until late October/November unless you live in a very warm, frost free district or are prepared to nurture them on a warm window sill or in a hot house and even then they may fail to thrive until evening temperatures rise, soil temperatures rise and day length increases in mid/late Spring.

## July

Transplant our autumn sown onions for overwintering sown in punnets in May in beds to their final spacing. This is done when daffodils are starting to bud and some Winter flowering wattles start to flower. Fertilise with a sprinkling of COF around each plant.

## August



At end of month attempt to sow tomato, chilli, capsicum and egg plant seeds in punnets on a heat mat at 25 degrees, they will germinate in about 15 days, transplant them only when they have a strong root system and at least four small leaves it is tricky getting the root to leaf ratio right when days are still short and temps are below 16 degrees.

Many people do grow their tomato plants from seed, you need patience, the correct temperatures and correct light levels. The sowings can be made like this

from August until approximately October. Then you can sow in the open ground, but remember early varieties will produce tomatoes a lot quicker and usually ripen faster than later varieties for example our excellent early varieties santa, cal mart, yellow taxi, siletz, Oregon spring, kooteni.

You can still plant potato onions, even though planting on the shortest day is suggested by many gardeners, wet winter soils can rot the bulbs, they will still produce a decent sized crop by January if planted now we've done it. Sow spring sown main crop red onions now. When soil starts to warm up, towards end of month sow radishes fireball, cheriette, shunkyo semi long, lettuce and English spinach, broad beans and Asian greens. In warmer districts (cool climate areas) sow early peas if soil is not waterlogged and cold if it is don't the peas will rot.

## September

Last chance at sowing broad beans for harvest in late November/December, Paramo does not like the heat, the purple flowering variety fares better, most are prone to bacterial leaf spot when days are hot and humid in height of summer. Think about sowing in autumn if you are in a warmer area.

Sow beetroot, English spinach, silverbeet, Asian greens first part of month, white lady sweet Japanese turnips, all lettuce types, especially Icebergs which usually head up better when sown early spring or late summer.

Sow all brassicas now, protect all these crops from diamond back and white butterfly use the fine netting for this purpose, or spray with success ultra or dipel, some other insecticides like pyrethrum are no longer as effective on these pest as the used to be. If you do not protect them they will be destroyed by these insects. Sow Tas butter swede, gillfeather swede and laurentian swede. Cut down green manures to the ground before they flower and dig in or leave trash on surface which will break down along with the roots ready for sowing/planting.



Put bean and pea netting up now for climbers and prepare the soil with lime, if needed, and fertiliser.

When the soils warm up but are not waterlogged yet still moist sow early peas, mid -season peas and late season peas in the ground, willow and greenfeast need a trellis, massey, onward can trail.

Sow small bush peas like meteor and twinkie in containers now.

Sow snow peas mammoth melting, purple podded, and Oregon giant. Sow spring onions, leeks, chives, parsley moss curled and Italian. Parsley can take three weeks to germinate, you can start these in punnets.

Protect all crops from slugs, birds, mice, possums, wallabies.

## October

In cold districts last chance at peas, as they can get mildews in warmer weather.



At end of month, if in very warm areas after last frosts or what looks like being a warm season, plant out early flowering/fruited chilli, capsicum, tomato seedlings/plants grown from seed at four leaf stage with a good root system but please protect them all with plastic cloches. Otherwise wait until November.

Continue sowing brassicas with protection from cabbage moths. Sow carrots, leeks, English spinach, beetroot, parsley, lettuce, spring onions, lettuces, parsnip. Sow silver beet but be aware that it can go to seed in some summers.

## November



After the very last light frosts sow sweet corn, dent and field corn and, observe volunteer tomato seedlings growing this is usually an indication that it is close to putting tomato plants in and sowing the seeds.

Sow zucchini F1, squashes, cucumbers mini and burpless, and pumpkins sweet grey, butternut, buttercup and orange cuties, when soil temperature is about 16 degrees constant all day choose the warmest sunniest spot in the garden for these.

A late spring with cold days and cold nights can affect the growth rates, flowering and fruiting time even of early varieties, don't be disappointed if crops are later in colder years at least you will get some, with later varieties you may not get any crops.

Sow watermelon Yellow doll and sugar baby, canteloup Fast break, and honeydew Passport in the warmest sunniest spots. We grow them in old tyres in one area and with a black plastic mulch in another which absorbs heat and they flower abundantly and produce delicious bountiful crops every year about end February early March.

Sow our harder to get runner beans, bush green beans, climbing green beans, beans, first or second week of the month, later in cooler areas earlier in warmer areas but try to avoid the last frosts. Sow dry beans and pinto beans for seed now this is why we sell early maturing varieties because they form seeds before the first autumn frosts in cool climates.



Green beans for a crop which are early producers like ours can be sown as late as December/January in warmer areas. If you suspect a very late frost one night put old flower pots over each plant overnight as a precaution.

Sow brown, white or blue speckled Tepary beans now. They originate in very dry regions of Mexico where the seeds get very early rains, they germinate fast, get established and then can tolerate dry conditions, they don't like very wet soils when they are established bushes and they don't compete with weeds very well. Sow in an area of your garden where they receive less water than other plants.

Direct sow early November our eggplant millionaire, and purple King seeds and our early producing chilli and capsicum seeds now, the plants will produce mid to late January/February, sow lettuce for Christmas. Sow carrots and Parsnips for Autumn/winter. Our catalogue states that the eggplants and watermelons are not suitable for cold areas but they are all early producers, it simply means very cold areas, not cool climates

Late November sow F1 Brussel sprouts. These need to grow their stems when days are long and form the sprouts when it gets colder, they then get a sweet nutty flavour they work particularly well in colder areas, in warmer areas they may not work and could form loose heads which taste bitter. Sow Kale, which also tastes sweet and peppery when grown in a colder area. Many people have had unfortunate experiences with bitter tough kale and Brussel sprouts grown in warmer regions, when the cold gets on them they really are sweet, soft and nutty flavoured.



## December

Sow Brussel sprouts F1, cabbage sweet green, broccoli, kale borecole, moretons line, cauliflower, lettuce sierra, slo bolt, winter density, cos, mignonette, red cross. You can also sow these in punnets for planting out next month. Direct sow Tas Butter swede, laurentian swede and gillfeather swede, and carrots. Sow summer green manure pearl millet if you don't want to sow crops in any vacant plots, these crops cope with drought but also improve soil texture and swamp out summer weeds like couch grass, thistles, fat hen and wire weed.

English spinach may go to seed if sown now, sometimes it does sometimes it doesn't. Do sow silverbeet. Sow parsnips,

Late December sow Brussel sprouts, cabbages, kale, cauliflower in punnets for planting in Jan.

Instead of writing the germination results on each of our packets in next month's newsletter I will give you the results of our January 2015 germination tests for all our seeds for your information. When you invest you want a good return.

**Happy gardening wherever you may be.**



\* Based originally on and adapted from Steve Solomon's sowing guide in "Growing Vegetables South of Australia".