

Lake Chelan Valley: Your Planting Calendar & Temperature Guide to get your Garden Started

Hello, fellow Lake Chelan gardeners! We've gotten a lot of questions lately about gardening. I guess since we're farmers, it means we know what we're doing... well, we continue to be humbled by Mother Nature. So, we put together some starting tips for you all. And, if you're wondering about dahlias, we'd say, you can get going within the next week or so. Karl plants his dahlias at the beginning of April in Stehekin. We typically shoot for the last two weeks of April. Either way, it seems like forever to see those first magical blooms. For vegetables, we believe smart timing, guided by soil temperatures and our frost-free window, is fundamental to a successful gardening experience here in our valley. Let's get your seeds and starts in the ground at the right moment!

Decoding Our Growing Season:

- **The Frost-Free Window:** Generally, expect our frost-free period to run from around **mid-May (think after Mother's Day)** through **mid-October**. Always keep an eye on local forecasts, as our diverse microclimates can lead to variations. Long time farmers in the area have often said, once we're past mid-April, we're safe. But, the caveat is – what species are you planting. For example, tomatoes are much more sensitive than say broccoli.
- **Soil Temperature Insights:** The warmth of the soil is a strong indicator of when plants will truly take off. Let's focus on the ideal temperatures for planting.

Your Lake Chelan Valley Planting Calendar & Temperature Guide:

Crop Category	Specific Examples	Planting Time	Ideal Soil Temp (°F)	Key Considerations
Early Spring Starts	Spinach, Lettuce, Radishes, Peas	As soon as soil is workable (often late Feb-April)	40-50 (and rising)	These can handle cooler conditions. Direct sow for best results.
Cool Season Crops	Broccoli, Cauliflower	Start indoors 6-8 weeks before last frost; transplant outdoors mid-April to early May <i>after hardening off and when risk of hard frost has lessened.</i>	45-55	Starting indoors gives them a head start for an earlier harvest.
Early Root Veggies	Carrots, Beets	Direct sow once soil begins to warm.	45-60	Ensure well-prepared, loose soil for good root development.
Potatoes	Potatoes	Plant seed potatoes when soil is warm and drier.	45-55	Allow ample space for underground growth.
Warm Season Basics	Bush & Pole Beans, Corn	Direct sow when soil is consistently warm.	60-70	These need consistent warmth for germination and strong growth.

Summer Squash	Zucchini, Summer Squash	Direct sow or transplant after the last frost.	65-75	Warmer soil promotes rapid germination and vigorous growth.
Cucumbers	Cucumbers	Direct sow or transplant when warm.	60-70	Provide support for vining types.
Tomatoes	Tomatoes	Transplant after <i>all</i> frost danger has passed.	60-75	Select varieties suited to our sunny conditions.
Peppers	Peppers	Transplant in warm soil, similar timing to tomatoes.	65-80	Consistent warmth is important for good yields.
Eggplant	Eggplant	Transplant in the warmest soil.	70+	Thrives in our warmest locations.
Herbs	Many varieties	Plant throughout spring/early summer in warm soil.	50+	A versatile addition to any garden.

Your Lake Chelan Valley Gardening Checklist:

- **Know Your Frost Dates:** Plant tender crops after mid-May.
- **Monitor Soil Temperature:** Use a soil thermometer for accurate planting, especially for heat-loving plants.
- **Improve Your Soil:** Consistent addition of organic matter is key for healthy plants.
- **Water Strategically:** Water deeply, especially during dry periods. But, check your soil. This can be done by digging in a bit, then grabbing a bit in your hand to truly see how much water is there. Water is one of THE most important aspects of growing plants... if you're growing in pots, this can be even trickier.
- **Choose Adapted Varieties:** Select plants recommended for the Maritime Northwest and our valley's specific conditions. (*Reference the "Maritime Northwest Gardening Guide"*)
- **Connect Locally:** Our “local” farmers and farmers' markets offer valuable, region-specific advice.
- **Have fun!** Gardening is a learning experience – have fun with it.

As always, if you have questions, shoot them our way. Good luck this season and if you're like us, we cannot wait to enjoy the “fruits” of our labor!! We've had trays going since February and we're excited to get these outside.

Chad, Jeana and The Steiner Bro's

Chelan Valley Farms