**“March Vegetable Garden”**

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March is the entry way for warm weather. In the vegetable garden, it is transition period between the cool weather and the warm weather vegetables.

The carrots, beets, rutabagas and turnips planted by seed in November should all be harvested as March proceeds. The newer seeded cool weather root crops may provide a harvest into early June.

The cool weather greens follow the same schedule as the root crops. As the weather gets warmer, be less worried about limiting harvest to one-third of the leaves. Use everything that you can eat because they will begin to become bitter as the weather warms. Aphids also show up in large numbers on the collards, Brussels sprouts and other cole crops when they begin to decline. Use them up before then. Swiss chard seems to be the green that lasts the longest into the summer. Look for it to be tasty and productive into June.

Onions are still going strong. Provide one more fertilization in the month to carry them through harvest in late May or early June. It is also important that enough green inions are harvested to thin the plants to about 6 inches apart so large bulbs can form. The onion tops will fall over when they are ready to be harvested.

If you have asparagus, the stalks should be cut down to ground level, so the new spears can be harvested as long as they stay thicker than pencil width. Depending on the age of your bed and fertility of the soil, the spears may be large enough to harvest for two to five weeks. When the spears decline in size, let them grow to full size again until next year.

Asparagus roots can be planted now. Look for them at your favorite nursery. Visit [www.plantanswers.com](http://www.plantanswers.com) for detailed information on asparagus culture.

Plant green beans, summer squash and sweet corn this month. You will have to apply an insecticide such as Sevin or Spinosad at the growing point of the squash every week to slow down the vine borers.

Sweet corn needs to be planted close together to achieve pollination. If space is limited, plant it in circles with the concentric rows 2 feet apart.

Everyone wants to plant tomatoes, but it is still too early on most sites. If tomatoes are planted when the soil and air temperatures are too low, the plants harden off making it a long time for them to kick into a growth mode again.

A better strategy is to buy your transplants now and pot them up in a 1 gallon container filled with potting soil until after April 1.

Find a sunny site protected from the wind so the tomato plants can keep growing at an accelerated rate. Fertilize heavily with Osmocote or a similar fertilizer for containers and move the plants into the house if temperatures are forecast to fall below 40 degrees.

The recommended tomato varieties for 2014 include Valley Cat, Tycoon, Tigress, BHN 968, Phoenix, 444, Celebrity and Solar Fire. My favorites for containers are BHN 968 and Tycoon. BHN 968 is particularly good for containers because it is a semi-determinant cherry tomato that only grows 5 to 6 feet tall. The fruit taste is superior and it seems to be the best tomato at tolerating our fluctuating temperatures and moisture.

English peas began the winter with great promise but were impaired by the cold weather. Expect plants with some unfrozen foliage left to produce some peas before they succumb to the heat in May.