



2023 Seed Starting Plan

Good morning, to you! This plan is customized for [Second Breakfast Gardens](#) and my hopes for this year. I've also added reminders for beginning [Slug IPM](#) and bed prep activities. For a full list of things to do, each month is linked to its calendar.

USDA Hardiness Zone: 8b

Garden Jargon Glossary

- **Annuals:** Plants that complete their life cycle in one year.
- **Biennials:** Plants that complete their life cycle in two years.
- **Perennials:** Plants that live 2+ years.
- **Direct Sow:** To plant a seed in a garden bed outside.
- **Start:** To plant a seed in sterile potting medium indoors.
- **Transplant:** Plant a start outside.
- **Cold Stratify:** Expose seeds to cold and moisture for a period of time.
- **IPM:** Integrated Pest Management. Strategy for keeping pests in check.

[January](#)

Cold stratify these perennial flowers: butterflyweed (milkweed), mallow, echinacea, feverfew, artichoke.

[February](#)

(Second half of the month.)

Start Seeds Indoors:

Garden Veggies:

- Broccoli (Double check your seed packet. There is a lot of variety with broccoli and some are more cold hardy/heat tolerant than others.)
- Peppers

- Chard
- Onions (shallots)

Herbs for my Tea Garden:

Most of my tea herbs are perennial e.g. camelia sinensis, peppermint, blackberry leaf, but I can never get enough chamomile.

- Roman Chamomile - Perennial
- German Chamomile - Annual

Bed Prep: Towards the end of the month when we have had a couple days of dry weather: cut and drop cover crop. Pull or cut any weeds at soil level, drop plant material to rot, unless there are seed heads.

March

Begin [Slug IPM Strategies](#): Remove leftover leaf mulch, set out beer traps, Sluggo, and shelter traps to begin thinning the hoards.

Bed Prep: After a few days of dry weather, lightly work the top inch of soil with a scuffle hoe to remove any germinating weeds, add feather meal to bring up nitrogen levels, rake in. Avoid volunteers.

Start Seeds Indoors:

Herbs for the Tea Garden & Medicine Garden:

- German Chamomile - Annual
- Marshmallow - Perennial
- Bee Balm - Perennial
- Echinacea - Perennial
- Feverfew - Biennial
- Holy Basil - Annual (Heat loving - sow last)

Garden Veggies:

- Artichoke
- Arugula
- Broccoli (for a later succession)
- Kale
- Leaf Lettuce (I like to start seeds indoors and direct sow lettuces.)

Culinary Garden Herbs:

- Cilantro
- Parsley

Garden Flowers:

- Milkweed (For when the monarchs return. 🦋)
- Sweet Alyssum (For beauty. I love the way they spill over the side of containers and beds. Pollinators love the tiny flowers.)
- Cosmos (So vibrant and beautiful!)
- Marigolds

Direct Sow: (Soil temp above 40 degrees.)

- Peas
- Carrots
- Beets
- Potatoes - Work in some feather meal to provide nitrogen.
- Sweet Pea (Flowers for pollinators, beauty, and fragrance.)
- Calendula (Broadcast seeds in fruit tree guilds or areas that need an aphid trap.)

April

Slug IPM Strategies: Monitor beer traps and shelter traps, refresh Sluggo.

Bed Prep: Use a scuffle hoe to work the top inch of soil to keep weed seedlings down.

Start Seeds Indoors:

Culinary Garden Herbs:

- Shiso
- Basil

Garden Fruits:

- Jelly Melon Cucumber
- Acorn Squash

Tip for cucurbit family: (squash, cucumber, melons):

These plants have sensitive root systems. For best results, sow in a newspaper pot, then up-pot into a larger plantable pot as soon as the roots poke through the paper. Then plant the whole pot in the garden bed. This enables the roots to penetrate the pot into the garden soil with minimal disturbance to their delicate root hairs.

Direct Sow: (Soil temperature should be above 40 degrees.)

Garden Veggies:

- Spinach
- Leaf Lettuces
- Nasturtiums
- Pole Beans (April is early, but if the soil is at least 50 degrees and they survive the slugs and cool nights, they do amazing. I usually re-sow a few in May.)

Summer Cover Crop:

- Buckwheat (For SBG3 bed. This bed has become unproductive due to a suspected soil pest overburden. This bed is on a 3 year rest with no summer irrigation.)
- Crimson clover for any planting area not under current cultivation.

Transplanting: Begin hardening off all February and March starts (except peppers). Transplant during this month on a cloudy, mild day. Monitor weather for cold spells or dry spells.

May

Slug IPM Strategies: Monitor beer traps and shelter traps, refresh Sluggo.

Direct Sow: Pole Bean (Soil temp above 55 degrees and beginning to dry. Slugs love bean sprouts.)

Transplanting: Begin hardening off peppers and April starts. Transplant on a mild day. Monitor for cold spells and dry spells. Provide nighttime protection e.g. blanket or cloches, if a cold snap is expected.

Plants to Buy from Nursery or Farmer's Market

The following plants are difficult to start at home, and I need only one each so it makes sense to buy from a local grower. Plus, it gives me a reason to visit and talk with other growers.

- Lemongrass (I overwintered one indoors. But I prefer to have more than one. May try to propagate.)
- Sorrel
- Passion Flower (I *really* want one of these.)
- Replacements for failures. (It's inevitable.)
- Whatever else strikes my fancy. There's always room for one more!

July & August

Turn on and test the drip irrigation system.

Start Seeds Indoors:

What? Starting seeds in July? Yep. The garden is usually full with a bonanza of beautiful plants in their prime. But in the dog days of summer we can start our fall veggies indoors then transplant as space opens up for a fall harvest. This year I want to start:

- Spinach
- Broccoli (Fall variety)
- Lettuce

September - November

When rain returns, start [Slug IPM](#) when transplanting fall crops.

Direct Sow:

- Fall Cover Crop
- [Garlic](#) - My favorite is the hardneck garlic. They produce a curly scape in late spring which can be cut and prepared and eaten as you would asparagus spears or diced and used as a mild garlic. If you leave the scape it will form bulbettes and your garlic bulbs will be smaller and less flavorful.

In [November](#), I put [things to bed for the season](#), with leaves, fresh garden soil, and cover crop. My Edible Stories Market Garden friends are able to actively grow spinach, onion, mustard greens, cilantro, broccoli, cabbage throughout the winter in their hoop houses. Outdoors I get some broccoli side shoots, carrots, beets, chard, and parsley.

What, what?! What about tomatoes?

My family are not big tomato fans and they take up a lot of space, so I've stopped growing them. But, if you'd like my opinion for dates, **start tomatoes indoors in late March**. Plan for up-potting at least once before **transplanting out in May**. Be sure to harden them off. Tomatoes appreciate being planted deep and the stems will put out more roots. (Most other plants will get stem rot.) Cherry tomatoes ripen easily in our season, but it is more difficult to ripen slicing tomatoes in 8b.

Advice for Growing Slicing Tomatoes in Zone 8b:

A season extender like a hoop-house or greenhouse is ideal for these big, warmth loving tomatoes. However, up at Edible Stories Market Garden, they are able to get a good set of slicing tomatoes outdoors too. The secrets: choose an indeterminate variety and train on a trellis that has full sun and faces south. Keep up with pruning suckers. (Branches that grow out of the joint of other branches.) Use a dark mulch like compost to keep the soil warm. During harvest season, take any fruits that have streaks of red-orange. Those will ripen indoors. Fully green tomatoes can be enjoyed too.

Have a wonderful growing season, my friends! Questions? amy@secondbreakfastgardens.com

For Further Reading:

OSU Extension Guide: [Fall and Winter Vegetable Gardening in the Pacific Northwest](#)
OSU [Growing Your Own Guide](#) (PDF)