

## How To Calculate When To Plant Your Seeds By The Moon.

First, **find the best moon phase** for your crops. If they are annual plants that produce above ground you will want to plant in the first or second quarter, preferably close to the time of the new or full moon. Root crops are best planted just after the full moon.

Secondly, **find the astrological sign of the zodiac that best represents your crop**. Roots are favored by earth signs of Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn; leafy crops are best planted in Cancer, Scorpio or Pisces; flowers are best in Libra, but also Gemini or Aquarius; and seed crops such as fruits and nuts may be planted in Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius. Some consider the fire signs to be barren and dry, and not the best for planting, so you can experiment and see what works for you. This information can be found on other calendars sometimes, or in an ephemeris, which will tell you the moon ingress (goes into a sign) or last aspect (leaves a sign) in Greenwich Mean Time.

Of course, you must be in the right season to get good results. Each type of seed has preferences of air and soil temperature for planting, which overrides the benefit of lunar cycles. **Starting seeds in flats**

If you want to get the most out of your season, especially if it is a short one, you will want to **start seeds in flats** in a controlled environment, and have them ready to go in the ground when the weather warms up. To calculate when to start seeds you need to know when your average last frost dates are. You can find that out from USDA frost maps, which provides general guidelines. For a more accurate date, contact your local agricultural extension, university or master gardeners program. Remember that these dates represent an average, and you may experience frosts after these dates as well.

Once you know your frost date, you will want to know **how many weeks it takes to grow to transplant size**. Starting at your last frost date, count backwards the number of weeks you need. Next, look for the nearest favorable moon phase, and then to the perfect moon sign. Some adjustment may be necessary, pushing that date up or back to accommodate a particularly frost sensitive plant, or a warmer year than normal. A plant can always be potted up and held until the outdoor temperature is right.

To calculate **when to start a fall garden**, work from the first expected frost date, counting back the number of weeks needed to reach harvest. In mild winter areas, hardy crops can be planted a month or two later. They need to get some good growth before the cold weather sets in, then they will reward you with an late fall or early spring harvest.

## Organic Gardening Tips And Techniques For A Natural Garden

Encourage the balance of nature at all times, and imitate the laws of nature to your benefit. When gardening by the moon, **all normal rules for gardening apply, especially the health of your soil! Lunar planting has been proven to be more effective in organic, non-chemically treated soil**. There is no substitute for creating a wonderfully rich microclimate by continually adding organic matter to your growing beds. This creates a living system that includes microbes to break down the soil, and adds nutrients and nitrogen content. This is the backbone of healthy, disease resistant plants. Think of your garden as a complete ecosystem that includes life and decay in the soil, the needs of the plants, and

insect life cycle as well. Work in harmony with nature to duplicate and replenish the essential elements at the base of the food chain.



In order to create a more disease and pest free environment, **try to cultivate favorable conditions for beneficial insects, butterflies and bees.** Encourage a diverse environment where they will live, reproduce and prosper to do the work of bug control for you. Avoid chemical sprays, **opting for the least invasive methods of control**, such as hand picking pests, or using insecticidal soap, which, although it will kill the good bugs on contact, won't leave harmful residue and lasting effects. Provide crops that offer food and homes. These include many herbs like dill and parsley, yarrow, nasturtium, angelica, evening primrose, baby blue eyes, strawflowers, daisies, cosmos, Queen Anne's lace, even weeds. Let some lettuce, parsley, cilantro or dill go to seed, then scatter the seeds around the garden. This keeps the butterflies happy, providing a continuous supply of food (for both of you!). Bees love borage, oregano and thyme and are necessary for plant pollination.

### **Switching to Organic Gardening**

If you have been chemically dependant for a long time, you need to make the changes in stages, because you have created a situation where the plants are artificially protected by those chemicals. They only get nutrients from what you feed it, and none from the natural breaking down of matter. If you take that away without compensating for it you could have problems. Too much nitrogen from chemical fertilizers can weaken plants. Even though they may look lush for a while, if they are putting too much energy into leaf growth, the resistance to disease suffers. **The first step is to increase the health of the soil**, so it becomes alive again. You need to add as much organic matter as you can. If you don't have snow on the ground it is not too late to do this. Pile on the shredded leaves, mulch, and manure and just let them break down over winter. Soon you will attract the worms, helpful fungi and other tiny creature that feed on the soil and break it down for you.

Healthy soil has trace minerals, which can be added through powders like kelp meal or bone meal, and gives a slow steady supply of nutrients. When the soil is improved, then you can back off the chemicals. If the soil is not compacted, the worms will even do the work of turning it in for you. I encourage you to **create permanent beds** that are never walked on. This concentrates the good amendments in one area. Keeping it uncompacted will pay off in the ease of turning, and the health of the root systems of plants. You don't even need to have solid sides to the bed. Just mound the soil to a width that you can reach across, and treat it as sacred ground. You need to replenish the nutrients that the plants have used every season. At least an inch of compost a year is a good rule of thumb.

You can get the upper hand on weeds by hoeing or pulling them young, and then adding mulch to smother them. For bugs, start early, before populations multiply, with the least invasive method first. Pick off and squish beetles, cabbage loopers; rinse off aphids with a strong blast of water. If you really need something for a situation that has gotten out of hand, try an insecticidal soap, or if you are desperate, Neem. Floating row covers are a great thing too. They are light weight blankets that create a protective barrier so the buggers can't get to your plants. Seal the edges well with dirt so they can't get in.

### **Compost is crucial**

It is not difficult to start a compost pile, especially if you are not in a hurry. The basic formula is to layer equal parts brown matter (straw, dried leaves) and green matter (grass clippings, plant matter, kitchen scraps, manure). The smaller the particles that you put in the pile, the faster it will decompose. Keep wet, but not too wet. The more you turn it, the faster it will work, but it will work eventually. Rot happens!

Remember to do **succession plantings**, especially of quick crops like lettuce, bush beans, radishes, spinach, carrots, and beets. That means planting again, as your first crop is reaching maturity. This will keep you in continual harvest during your season.

Stay attuned to the seasons. You can **start seeds inside under lights or in a greenhouse**, and have them ready to go in the ground when the time and temperature are right. Don't be afraid to plant beyond the usual times if it looks mild, or to **use row covers and cold frames to extend the season**. Or you may hope for a late warm spell in fall and see if you can get in another crop. Use the microclimates created by overhead cover, ground slope or bodies of water to plant marginal crops that need a warmer spot. Working with the forces of nature tips the balance in your favor.

### **Use your own judgment when planting by the moon**

Life is full, however, and sometimes you just can't plant at the perfect time. You may have to choose if it is best to plant in the correct moon phase, or a fertile sign of the zodiac, as your time allows. Or if you have to plant in the wrong phase, at least give it any advantage possible by working in the fruitful signs. It may be more important to plant before a storm comes, before the plant has outgrown its container or before it is too late in the season. Feel free to use your best judgment.