

Planning for a Longer Season speaker notes

Slide

16-57 MANIPULATING **PLANTS & SEEDS** FOR LONGER SEASON

- 16 Winter sowing outdoors is a great option for those without indoor starting space
- 17 Presprouting seeds in damp paper towels kept in a plastic bag will help get a jumpstart on growing. Sprouted seeds are committed to growing, and a bit more forgiving of cooler temperatures in the seed starting medium
- 18 Indoors, keep seedling in the brightest possible window, or 2-4" under florescent lights
- 19-24 Refer to handout for early seed starting dates
- 25 Before transplanting outdoors, be sure to harden off home-grown seedlings over a period of a week or two, by gradually acclimating them to full sun outdoors.
- 26 A soil thermometer is an excellent tool to find the appropriate planting time in your garden
- 27-31 Several seeds may be sown in relatively cool soil (below the 50F minimum for most warm-season vegetables)
- 31 Although seed potatoes may be planted considerably earlier, and will often overwinter, they don't actually start growing until soil temperature reaches 45F
- 32-42 Suggested range of planting dates for succession planting of several vegetables
- 36 Or plant early-, midseason-, and late-sweet corn varieties at the same time for an extended harvest
- 37 If your late planted sweet corn won't reach maturity, harvest the cobs at silk stage for baby corn.
- 38 Early zucchini often succumbs to vine borers, so hedge your bets by planting a second crop when the first one starts to bloom.
- 39-41 Pole beans provide a long harvest, starting just when the first flush of bush beans are finished. Pole beans will continue to frost, or you can cut back the bush bean plants to 6" and they will return for a second harvest.
- 43 Harvest only half the asparagus patch in the spring, leaving the other half untouched. In August, cut the untouched half to the ground and then harvest the new shoots for no more than 6 weeks. Alternate halves the following year.
- 45-53 Suggested range of planting dates for fall harvest of several vegetables

60 - 91 MANIPULATING AIR AND SOIL FOR A LONGER SEASON

- 63 DIY plant covers made by cutting bottom off ice cream pail, and removing center of lid. Either cloth or plastic wrap may be used under the lid to form a mini-greenhouse or plant shelter for a week or two.
- 64 Commercial water-filled protectors offer lots of protection, but are painstaking to fill, and almost impossible to repair. Most need additional support to prevent them from collapsing onto the plant they are supposed to protect.
- 65 Either commercial or homemade cold frames work well, but must be ventilated early on sunny days or the plants inside can easily cook.
- 66 Heating cold frames with soil cables extends their useful timeframe by several weeks.
- 67 Clean window well covers may be bolted together for a portable cold frame
- 68 Plastic applied directly to the soil a few days before planting may warm the soil 6 degrees (black plastic) up to 12 degrees (clear plastic) InfraRed Transmitting material (IRT) warms somewhere between those numbers.
- 69 Building raised beds allows the sun to warm the soil better and the bed sides will also absorb and radiate heat at night, to prevent a quick cool-down.
- 70 Mounding soil forms quasi-raised beds which still warm earlier in the spring than flat ground
- 71 Covering shallow furrows with plastic forms greenhouse conditions for early-planted seeds
- 73 Spun-bonded polyester fabric has multiple uses in the garden. Light weight works best directly over plants for insect protection, but lasts only one season. Medium weight serves the same purpose, but may last 2-3 years, with care. Heavy weight offers best frost protection, but also needs support to keep it from rubbing on growing plant tips.
- Row covers may be purchased online or at better garden centers. Make-shift fabric such as interfacing or other lightweight fabrics such as tulle or chiffon may be used in some situations, but they cost considerably more and are just enough heavier that support is necessary to keep the fabric from rubbing on growing plant tips.
- 74 Row cover edges need to be buried or firmly attached to keep them in place. Several types of staples or pins are available for that purpose.
- 75 See separate handout for directions to make this portable frame
- 78 Insects can also proliferate under row covers (aphids stunted rutabaga in lower right under a row cover), so check plants from time to time.

- 79 Light weight row covers over strawberries during the winter provide even better protection than straw. Half the row shown were covered with row covers, the other with straw. In spring, the covered half bloomed earlier, much more profusely, and set more fruit than the uncovered half.
- 80 Apply row covers over a hoop structure if the fabric may damage the plants underneath, especially in windy conditions.
- 86 Bales of straw or plywood pieces may be placed directly on the soil in mid-summer to cool the soil before planting. Allow about a week, and check the soil temperature to find optimum conditions for cool-season seed planting.
- 87 After germinating in cooled soils the weather may still be too warm for optimum growth. A shade cloth placed on supports over the plants will cut down light and heat until the weather cooperates
- 90 Pick underripe tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and summer squash when frost threatens. Many immature fruits are excellent as is (eggplant, squash, peppers, green tomatoes), and others may be allowed to finished ripening indoors (tomatoes, peppers) which can extend the season by up to a couple weeks longer
- 91 The hoops mark a spinach planting which is alive, healthy, and harvested every year for a Christmas day fresh spinach salad. Snow provides the only protection.