

Plant by the Weather not the Season

It is said that God invented rainy days so gardeners could get their housework done. Theoretically, our houses should all be shining, but I suspect with this much rain, gardeners are actually just tracking in mud.

Often in Kansas, we move from winter to summer with such a short transition period that we mourn the missed spring. But in a year like this one, with cool temperatures and plenty of rain, our summer is becoming an extended spring.

Although we have a tendency to grumble if our picnics and games get rained out, this is perfect weather to extend the planting season.

These conditions are right for planting almost any vegetable or flower. With cool temperatures and plenty of water, even cool season vegetables, such as Cabbage, Cauliflower, Broccoli, and Spinach can go in. Since the soil has had a chance to get thoroughly warm, warm season vegetables such as tomatoes and peppers can also be planted.

Flowers like Alyssum and even Pansies which have usually stopped blooming by now are still going. The blooms on Snapdragons seem to be lasting forever. Roses are spectacular this year (maybe they think they're in England).

Perennial flowers such as May Night Salvia, Yarrow, and Coneflower that are often chosen because they can tolerate drought are flourishing!

Forget that it's summer. If you have space, put it in. The best time to plant is right before a rain so your new specimen gets thoroughly watered. In fact, that's how you know it's time to go in—when your glasses are so wet you can't see to dig, or the holes fill before you can put anything in them.

Besides canceled outdoor activities, is there any downside to all this rain? Not really, but you should watch a few things. Make sure your pots are draining. Gravel in the bottom isn't enough. They need drain holes. When a pot isn't or can't drain be sure to dump the standing water occasionally. If your flower beds have standing water, you might be able to draw little irrigation ditches with the corner of your hoe to encourage the water to run off. Also, when the soil is dry again, remember that these are beds that need some extra compost mixed in to foster better drainage next time.

We do encourage you to use a planting calendar; however, Mother Nature doesn't always abide by her own calendar. Many of our vegetables are warm season plants and want the soil to be thoroughly warm before they are planted. I know there's a race to get the first ripe tomato by the 4th of July, but tomatoes (and especially peppers) shouldn't be planted into cold soil. Occasionally we have a spring like this one where I'm writing in mid-May, my phone says its 55 degrees and I'm shivering in my jacket at my computer. This spring we could go by Seattle's calendar. Although, I am chilly today, I'm delighted because this is the kind of spring that lets me go on planting.