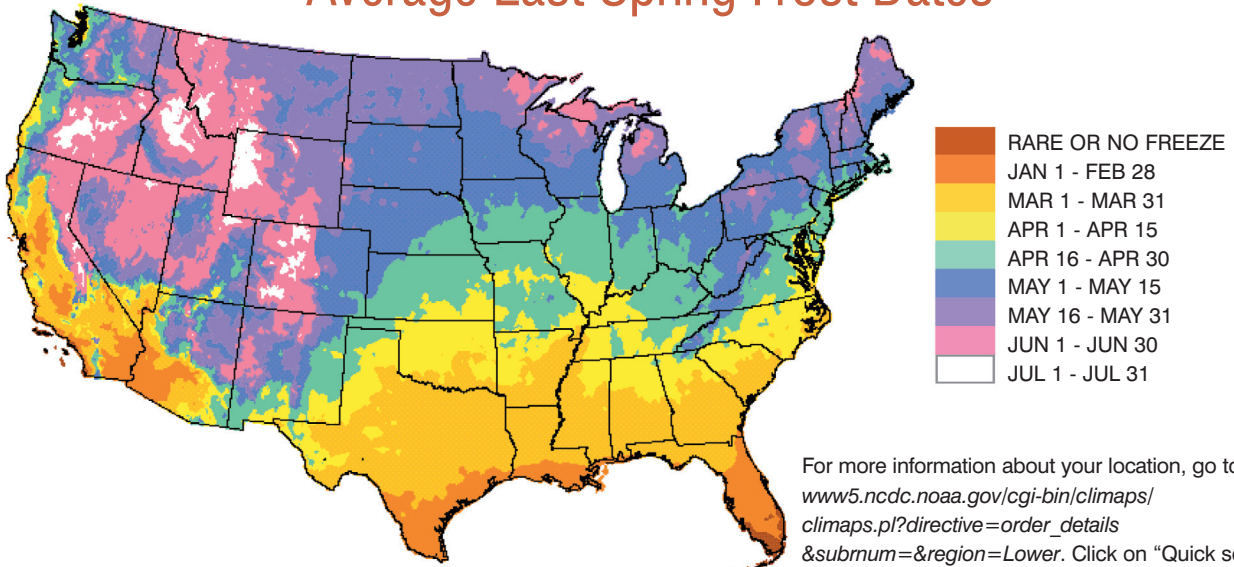


Average Last Spring Frost Dates



For more information about your location, go to www5.ncdc.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/climaps/climaps.pl?directive=order_details&subnum=®ion=Lower. Click on "Quick search."

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION'S OFFICE OF CONSTITUENT SERVICES

Spring Indoor Seed-starting Guide

How to use the chart below: First, estimate the date your last spring frost is expected using the range of dates indicated on the map on above. Record the frost-free date it indicates for your region in the blank space provided below these instructions.

Next, get a calendar and, for each crop, add or subtract the number of weeks in column two, "Safe setting-out time," from your frost-free date. Record these dates in the blank spaces under column

three, "Setting-out date." This is the date it should be safe to plant your seedlings outside. (Remember to harden them off for a week or so before planting them out.) Now, take each date from column three, subtract the number of weeks shown for that crop in column four, "From sowing to setting-out," and record that date in column five, "Start indoors date." That is the latest you should start those seeds indoors.

The spring frost-free date in my garden is _____ (based on the map above).

Fruits & Veggies	Safe setting-out time relative to frost-free date	Setting-out date	From sowing to setting-out	Start indoors date	Seed-starting tips
Broccoli	2 weeks before	_____	4 to 6 weeks	_____	Choose an early variety for your indoor planting
Cabbage	4 weeks before	_____	4 to 6	_____	Plant thinly; keep cool
Cantaloupe	2 weeks after	_____	3 to 4	_____	Presprout in a paper towel at 80 degrees and then plant carefully in a 4-inch pot. Not a good candidate for starting in flats
Cauliflower	2 weeks before	_____	4 to 6	_____	Keep cauliflower growing steadily to ensure good heads
Cucumber	1 to 2 weeks after	_____	3 to 4	_____	Root often emerges first
Eggplant	2 to 3 weeks after	_____	8 to 10	_____	Can presprout; do not withhold water while hardening off
Leek	4 weeks before	_____	6 to 8	_____	Plant out in trenches
Lettuce	3 to 4 weeks before	_____	4 to 5	_____	Cover seeds thinly, and thin to 3 inches apart in the flat
Okra	2 to 4 weeks after	_____	4 to 6	_____	Soak fresh seeds to soften coat; use deep pots for taproots
Onion	4 weeks before	_____	6 to 8	_____	Use fresh seed, start early and keep at less than 70 degrees
Pepper	2 weeks after	_____	6 to 14	_____	Keep soil on the dry side
Tomato	1 to 2 weeks after	_____	6 to 8	_____	Transplant twice, from starting flat to cell-pack, to 3-inch pots
Herbs					
Basil	1 week after	_____	6	_____	Cover only lightly with fine soil
Chives	1 week after	_____	8	_____	Use fresh seed
Lemon balm	3 weeks before	_____	8	_____	Do not cover; needs light to germinate; protect from heavy frost
Parsley	3 weeks before	_____	9 to 10	_____	Presoak seed twice to speed up germination
Sage	1 week before	_____	8	_____	Keep seedlings dry
Thyme	2 weeks before	_____	8 to 10	_____	Keep soil surface dry
Flowers					
Ageratum	1 week after	_____	4	_____	Do not cover; needs light to germinate
Dahlia	2 weeks after	_____	8	_____	Save tubers in fall, store in peat moss in a cold, protected place
Marigold	2 weeks after	_____	6 to 8	_____	Tall varieties and hybrids bloom earlier if started indoors
Nicotiana	2 weeks after	_____	6 to 8	_____	Do not cover; needs light to germinate; bottom water
Petunia	2 weeks after	_____	10 to 12	_____	Do not cover; needs light to germinate; bottom water
Snapdragon	1 week after	_____	10 to 12	_____	Do not cover; needs light to germinate; bottom water
Zinnia	2 weeks after	_____	6 to 8	_____	Touchy about transplanting; keep water off leaves to prevent fungus



WALTER CHANDOHA

All of the above, with the exception of slow growers such as eggplant and peppers, can be direct-sown in the garden. If you start them indoors, you gain an earlier and sometimes better harvest. Start most seeds in a warm location (70 to 80 degrees) but move to a cooler location (60 to 65 degrees) as soon as they sprout. Be sure all have adequate light (see article for more details).