

GROWING VEGETABLES in Time for the Holiday Dinner



Disclaimer

This is not a general “how to” grow vegetables course. It is a “how to” grow vegetables in time for the holidays course.

General vegetable growing knowledge can be obtained by going to our website (cvwd.org) and accessing our previous 2017 presentation:

Click: Conservation -> Seminars, Workshops & Classes -> Residential -> Past Workshop Materials ->

“Vegetable Gardening in the Desert”

Why Try to Grow Your Own Holiday Dinner Vegetables?

- 1. Variety, variety, variety:
 Take Sweet Corn: Supermarket (2) (Seed Catalog 13)
- 2. Freshness
- 3. Taste
- 4. Exclusiveness
- 5. Pesticide-free
- 6. **Because we - in the desert southwest - can!**

In most parts of the U.S., we plant in the Spring, grow through the Summer and harvest in the Fall. In the lower southwestern deserts, however, we can also plant in late Summer/early Fall and harvest in the Winter. Otherwise we have to eat domestic commercial or imported, commercial vegetables for Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinner.

What Makes It Possible to Grow Year-Around Vegetables in the Coachella Valley??

1. The Coachella Valley has a long growing Season:
 - a) In a full year we average 330 frost free days, but the frosts occur during the holiday season.
 - b) In a full year we experience 93% possible sunshine hours, but the winter growing season gets the least amount of sunshine and summer gets the most.
2. ALWAYS REMEMBER: A plant is first and foremost, always and forever: **A light-eating machine!**
3. All the water and fertilizer in the world will not make up for Fall's diminishing sunlight and cooling temperatures.
4. Therefore we must chose our Fall vegetable plants wisely in order to succeed. This means choosing those vegetables who need the least light to mature!

What Knowledge is Essential to Successfully Growing Holiday Vegetables in the Coachella Valley?

- **Always remembering:** A plant is first and foremost, always and forever: A light-eating machine!
- 1. On September 17th (Today) our plants are receiving 12 hours and 21 minutes of sunshine. Tomorrow they will receive about 1-2 minutes less.
- 2. By November 28th (Thanksgiving) our plants will be receiving 10 hours and 8 minutes of sunshine.
- 3. By December 25th (Christmas) our plants are receiving 9 hours and 55 minutes of sunshine.
- 4. They have lost 2 hours and 13 minutes/day by Thanksgiving and 2 hours and 34 minutes/day by Christmas and **THEY DON'T LIKE IT!**

“SULK TIME”

“Sulk Time” As Fall approaches winter, the daylight period shrinks, temperatures drop and fall annual crops descend into a no-growth “funk” period.

This is a natural response to diminishing sunlight.

Extra water and/or fertilizer do not help the situation.

The cure is the passage of time and the detection of increasing daylight and rising temperatures: That would be about 3 weeks after the December 21st Winter Solstice.

The trick to getting a harvest by the holidays is to find the vegetable variety that needs the least sunshine to get to the harvest stage and plant that one in the Fall.

The magic number to find is the vegetable variety with the lowest number of “Days-to-Maturity”.

Days to Maturity Explained

1. It is the time needed for the plant to reach maturity. If the seed is planted directly in the ground like a carrot seed, then the time to maturity is the time between planting and harvesting the first carrot.
2. This information is found on the back of the seed packet or in the seed catalog's plant description.
3. It is not exact in it's prediction: stormy, cloudy days slow things down and bright sunshiny days speed things up, but it does reliably identify those plants who need less sunshine to reach maturity than similar types (varieties) of plants who need more.

What Vegetables Can You Grow in the Fall in the Coachella Valley?

- 1. Cool Season Vegetables
- 2. Warm Season Vegetables
- 3. The Odd Balls

Characteristics of Cool Season Vegetables

1. Frost Tolerant
2. Harvest a root, stalk, leaf or an immature inflorescence (Flower)
3. Shorter growing season (35-75 days)
4. Plant between September – February
5. NOTE: The number of days between September 17th and Thanksgiving is 72 days and for Christmas it is 99 days!



Vegetable Root Crops

Beets, carrots, onions, parsnips, radish, rutabaga, turnip, etc.



The Leaf Crops

Vitamin Factories: Lettuce, Spinach, Swiss Chard, etc.



The Cole Crops

Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower*, Brussels Sprouts, Kohlrabi and Kale

Big Plants: Heavy Feeders. Pre-Plant N-P-K (Complete fertilizer) + 1-2 side-dressings of Nitrogen.

*Needs to be blanched by covering with outer leaves



The Stalk Crop
Celery

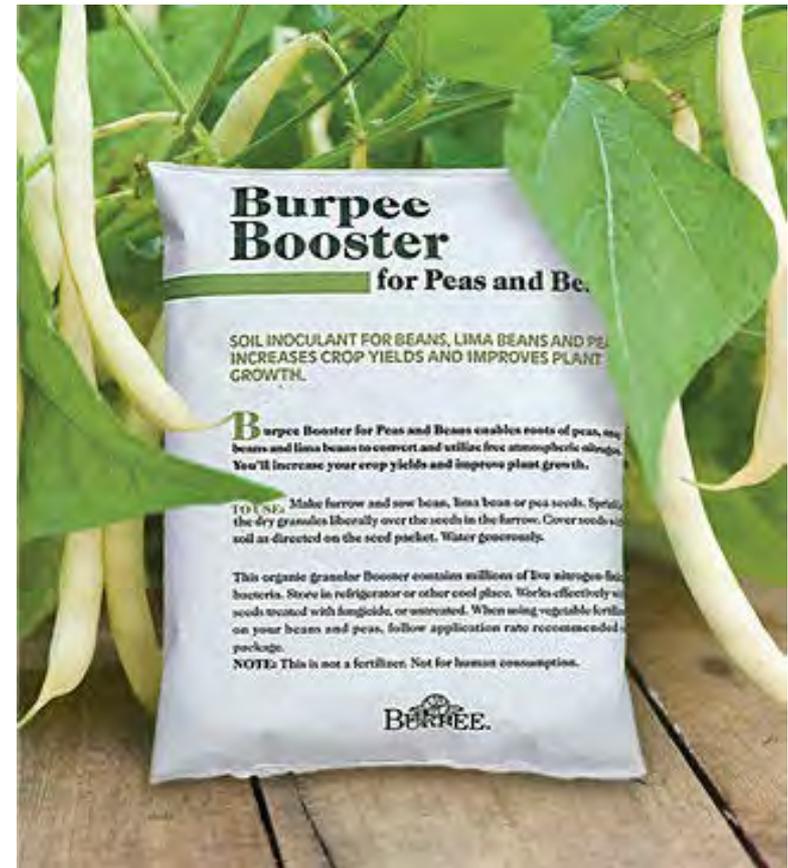
The Legume Crop: Garden Peas (Can be bush peas* or pole peas)

* Mature faster

Garden Peas



Innoculant



Barefoot Contessa's Sauteed Carrots

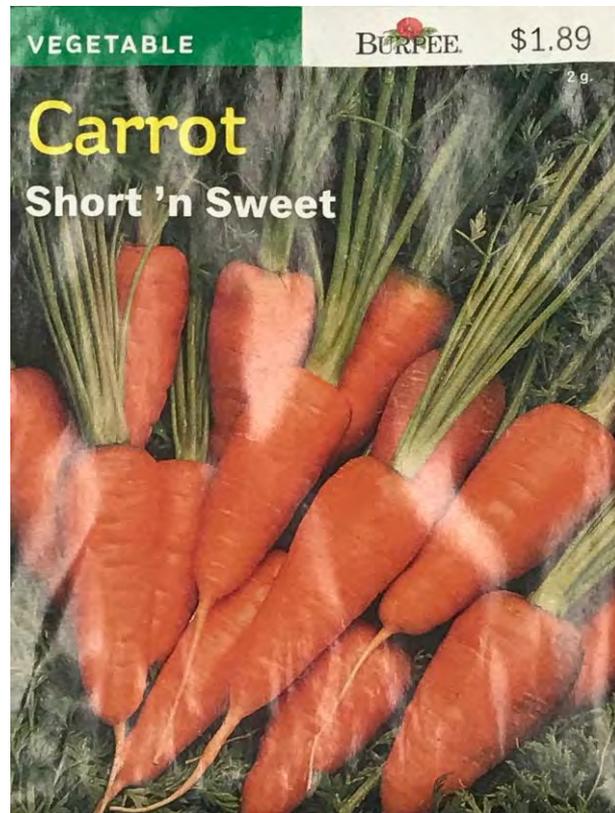


Burpee Seeds

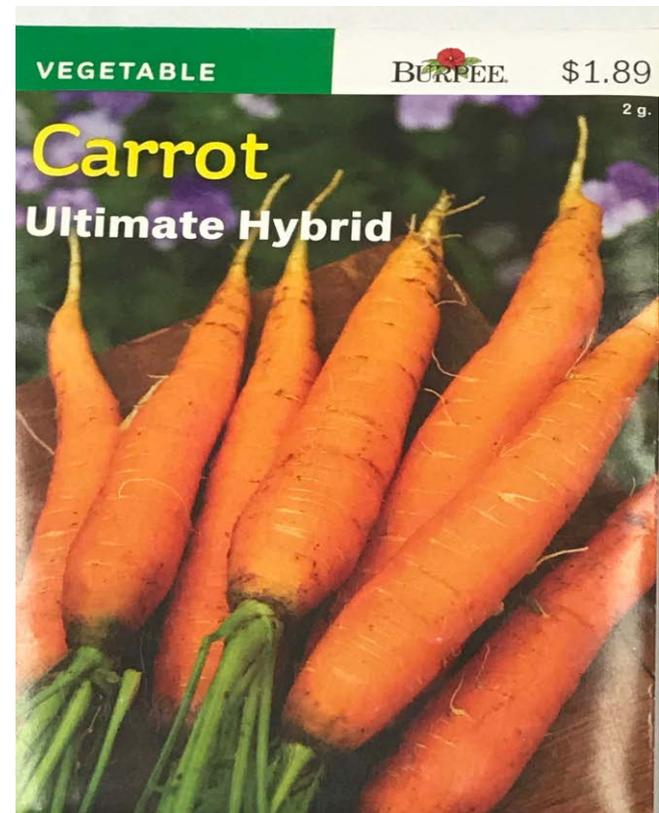


Carrots: Which Should You Choose for a fall planting for Thanksgiving Dinner?

**Short 'n Sweet:
68 Days to Harvest**



**Ultimate Hybrid:
80 Days to Harvest**



Brussels Sprout Gratin



Johnny's Selected Seeds Catalog: Which one would you choose for a fall Planting for Christmas Dinner?

Churchill: 90 Days



Diablo: 110 Days



Characteristics of Warm Season Vegetables

1. Frost Sensitive
2. Harvest a Fruit
3. Longer growing season (60-124 days)
4. Plant between August-September + February-March.
5. NOTE (Again): The number of days between September 17th and Thanksgiving is 72 days and for Christmas it is 99 days!
6. NOTE ALSO: First frost is historically around Thanksgiving weekend in the Valley's renown cold spots (lower elevations)



The Solanaceous Fruits

Tomatoes, Peppers and Eggplant.



The Vine Crops

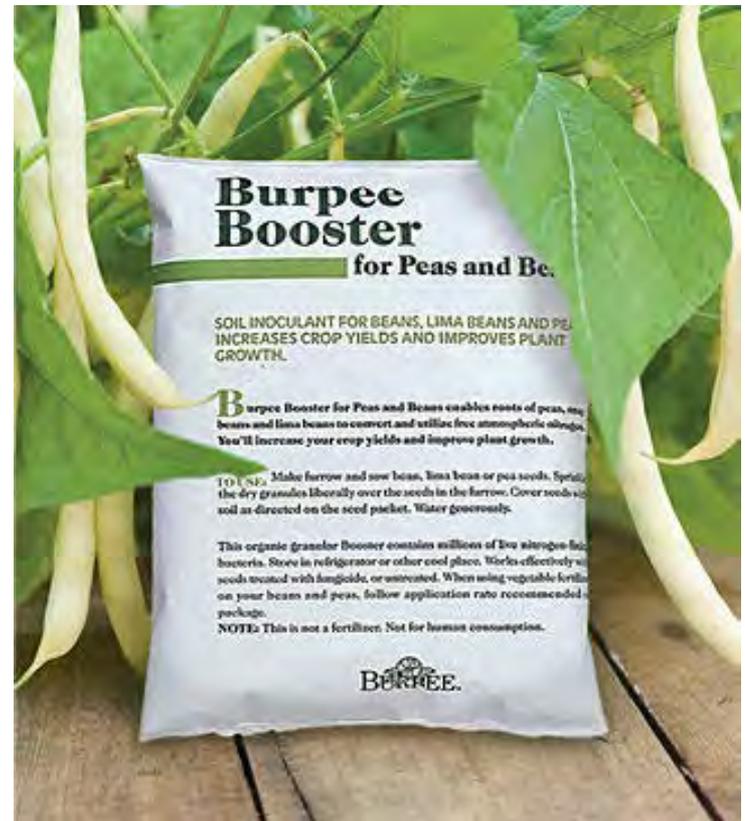
Melons, Squash (Winter and Summer), Cucumber and Pumpkins

The Legume Crop: Garden Beans (Bush/Pole)

Garden Beans



Innoculant



The Warm Season Oddballs

**Sweet Corn: For good pollination,
Plant in a block, not a single row**



**Okra: Goes all through the
summer**



Lemon-Maple Squash



Burpee's Seed Catalog: Which one should you choose for a fall planting for Thanksgiving Dinner?

Butterbush: 75 Days



Waltham: 85 Days



Easy Corn Pudding

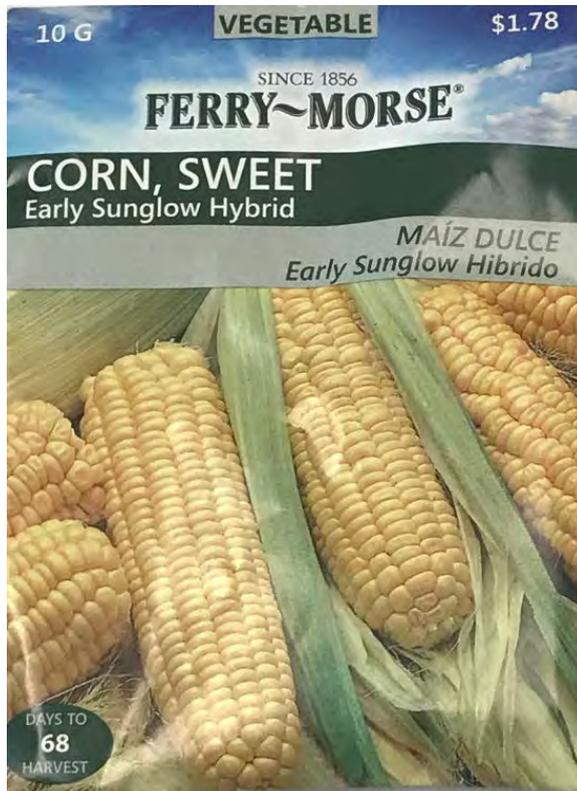


Ferry Morris Sweet Corn Choices

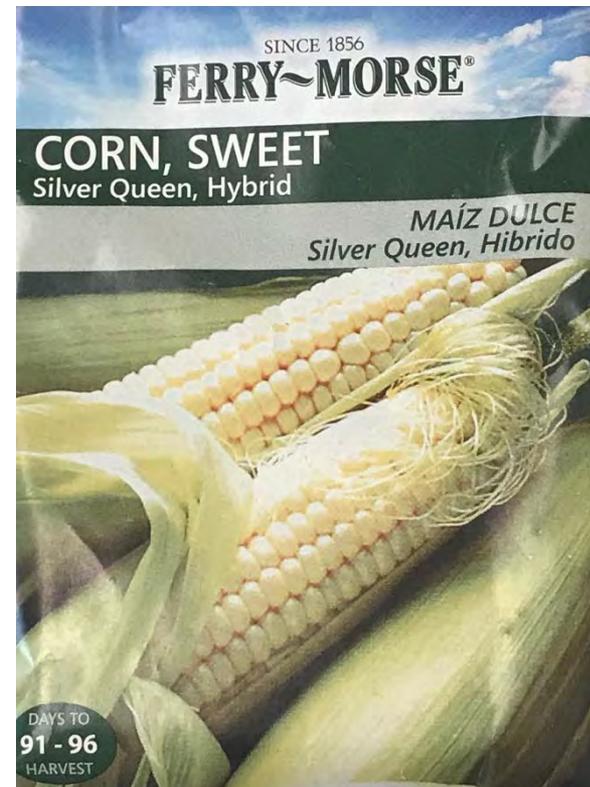


Sweet Corn: Which one should you choose for a fall planting for the Holidays ?

Early Sunglow Hybrid:
68 Days to Harvest
(Thanksgiving)



Silver Queen, Hybrid:
91-96 Days to Harvest
(Christmas)



Green Bean and Mushroom Salad



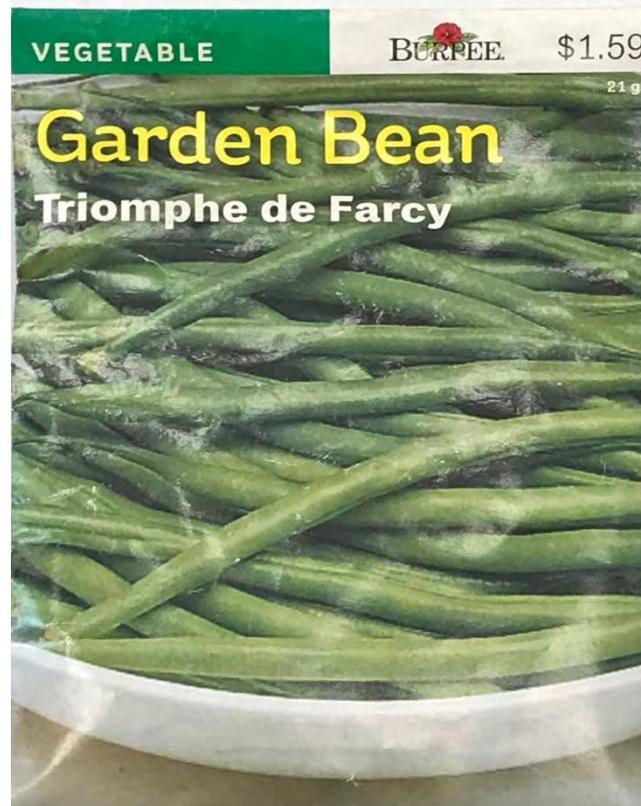
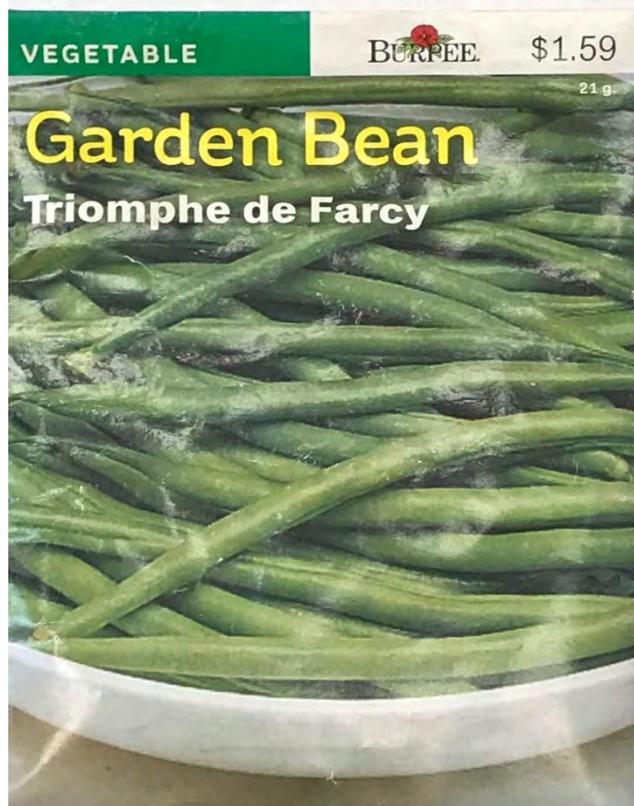
Burpee Bean Choices



Garden Beans: Which should you choose for a fall planting for Thanksgiving?

Triomphe de Farcy: 48 Days

Kentucky Wonder: 65 Days



Some other things you might want to do to shorten ‘Days to Maturity’ time

1. In late Fall, speed up germination by warming the soil with a plastic mulch cover or place a soil Heating Cable along side the planting row.
2. Pre-soak large seeds (Beans, peas, etc.) overnight before planting to speed-up germination.
3. Supply supplemental artificial grow light.
4. Supply reflective light with white boards.

Source of Vegetable Dishes Used in this Presentation

Google:

“37 Best Thanksgiving Vegetable Dish
Recipes”

QUESTIONS ?

Thank You!





Vegetable Root Crops

Carrots



The Cole Crops

*Needs to be blanched by covering with outer leaves



The Vine Crops

Melons, Squash (Winter and Summer), Cucumber and Pumpkins

Space Takers: Train, trellis or grow midgets

Sweet Corn

