

## *VEGETABLES FOR SOUTHERN UTAH*

Tony McCammon • Bloom Horticulture Specialists [www.bloomhorticulture.com](http://www.bloomhorticulture.com)

Growing vegetables and fruits year-round in your desert garden is not as difficult as you may think it is. Choosing the proper cultivars and varieties is the first step to a successful garden. Part of the fun is figuring out what tastes best. Here is a proven list from Bloom Horticulture Specialists, your local experts in Design, Consultation, and Diagnostics. These suggested varieties are grown successfully at community gardens, community supported agriculture projects, and research stations from Salt Lake City, Utah to Phoenix, Arizona.

We have two main gardening seasons here in the desert – spring and fall. With a little effort, these seasons can be extended, and you can potentially be growing in your garden year-round. Light and temperature are important factors in determining what to plant when, and where.

Choose quick maturing varieties to plant. For spring crops, this allows them to mature before the wicked summer heat hits. For cool season crops, this allows a succession of plantings to stretch out your harvest.

### *COOL SEASON (August 15 – April 1)*

**ARTICHOKE** • Globe, Purple; Cardoons

**ARUGULA** • Astro, Bellezia, Rocket, Sylvetta

**BEETS** • Detroit Dark Red, Golden, Chioggia, Bulls Blood

**BROCCOLI** • Purple Sprouting, Marathon, Waltham 29, Blue Wind, & De Cicco; Broccolini; Chinese Broccoli; Broccoli Raab/Rapini

**CABBAGE** • Copenhagen, Red Acre, Red Express, Early Jersey Wakefield **CARROTS** • Red Core Chantenay, Nantes, Danvers, Purple Dragon, Cosmic Purple, Babette

**CAULIFLOWER** • Snow Crown, Snow Queen, Romanesco, Cheddar, Purple Head

**CELERY** • Utah 52-70 Tall Improved, Coquistador

**CHINESE CABBAGE** • Napa, Bok Choi, Pac Choi

**FAVA BEANS** • Broad Windsor

**FENNEL** • Florence, Zefa Fino, Bronze

**GARLIC** • Soft Neck Varieties

**GREENS** • Collard Greens, Giant Red Mustard Greens, Purple & Green Mizuna, Radicchio, Tree Collards (Walking Stick Kale), Curly Endive, Minutina

**KALE** • Blue & Lacinato, Nero Di Toscana, Red Russian, Tronchuda

**KOHLRABI** • Vienna Purple, White Vienna, Superschmelz

**LEEKs** • King Richard, Musselburgh

**LETTUCE** • Red & Green Romaines (Parris Island Cos & Rouge D’hiver); Looseleaf Varieties, Marvel Of Four Seasons, Lollo Rossa, Black Seeded Simpson, Outredgeous

**ONION** • Itoi, Crystal White Wax, Other Short Day Bulb Cultivars

**PEAS** • Oregon Sugar Pod II, Sugar Snap, Bistro

**RADISH** • Watermelon, French Breakfast, Cherry Belle, Easter Egg, Russian Black

**RUTABAGA** • Purple Top

**SPINACH** • Rushmore, Bossa Nova, Bloomsdale, Polka, Unipack 151

**SWISS CHARD** • Bright Lights, Fordhook Giant, Rainbow

**TURNIPS** • Purple Top White Globe, Hakurei

**Summer vegetable gardening is only limited by temperatures greater than 100 degrees. These temperatures make pollen infertile and cause flowers and fruit to abort on most tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, etc. Other plants (melons, squash, okra, etc.), will thrive in such temperatures.**

**When looking at seed packets or plant labels, if it says, “full sun location” translate that into “afternoon shade is helpful” for summer crops. For many vegetables, light afternoon shade or all-day filtered sun is beneficial or necessary in the summer. Others prefer, and thrive in, full sun (melons, squash, okra, etc.).**

### *WARM SEASON (March 20 – October 1)*

**AMARANTH** • Hopi Red Dye, Green Callaloo

**ASPARAGUS** • Mary’s Granddaughter UC72, UC157

**CUCUMBER** • Armenian, Marketmore, Beit Alpha, Lemon

**EGGPLANT** • Black Beauty, Listada de Gandia, Long Purple Early, Japanese Cultivars (Ping Tung, Kamo), Indian Cultivars (Ratna, Bijli)

**EGYPTIAN SPINACH** • Molokhia

**DRY BEANS** • Bisbee Red & Bisbee Black, Tiger’s Eye, Tepary

**FRESH BEANS** • Provider Bush, Blue Lake Pole, Dragon’s Tongue, Scarlet Runner, Chinese Red Noodle

**HIBISCUS SABDARIFFA MALABAR SPINACH** • Red & Green

**MELONS** • Charentais, Hale’s Best Jumbo Cantaloupe, Honeydew, Ananas, Canary, Cucamelon

**OKRA** • Clemson Spineless, Red Burgundy, Texas Hill Country Red

**PEPPERS** • Early Jalapeno, Del Arbol, Poblano, Serrano, Habanero, Ghost, Tepin/Pequin/Chiltepin, Hungarian Wax, Banana, Asian Cultivars (Shishito, Fushimi, Thai Hot)

**TOMATO** • Yellow Pear, Solar Fire, Punta Banda, Green Zebra, Indigo Rose, Texas Wild Cherry, Juliet, Esterina, Amana Orange, Black Krim, Cherokee Purple, Pantano

Romanesco, Early Girl, Celebrity, Pearson, Blush, Violet Jasper, Gardeners Delight, Fourth Of July, Bonnie's Best, Cherry & Current Cultivars (Black, Chocolate, Champagne & Sun Gold), Most Roma & Paste Cultivars

**TOMATILLOS** • Green or Purple (must have two plants to cross-pollinate)

**SWEET POTATO** • Golden Jewel, Centennial, Georgia Red, Oklahoma Red, Yellow Jersey

**WATERMELON** • Tohono O'odham Yellow, Hopi Yellow, Desert King, Yellow Doll, Crimson Sweet, Black Diamond

**SUMMER SQUASH** • Straight & Crookneck Yellow, Scallop (Pattypan), Ronde de Nice (8-Ball)

**WINTER SQUASH** • Waltham Butternut, Acorn, Spaghetti, Luffa, Tohono O'odham Cushwa

**PUMPKINS** • Seminole, Navajo, Jack Be Little, Sugar Pie, Blue Jarrahdale

**ZUCCHINI** • Genovese, Bolognese, Verde d' Italia, Yellowfin, Dark Star, Costata Romanesco

**SOIL CONSIDERATIONS** • Our desert soils are typically low in organic matter. Because of this, and the typical alkaline nature of our soils, nutrients aren't always readily available for plant uptake. For successful vegetable gardening, soils need organic matter added to them regularly.

For preparation of a new garden bed a 6-8" layer of compost worked into the soil provides good organic matter, enhancing the soil structure. For optimal root development, the soil should be worked to a depth of about 18 inches. This will accommodate the root system of just about any vegetable you will want to grow.

**WATER** • Deep watering is essential here in the desert. Plants need a deep healthy root system to survive our grueling summers. Deep watering also leaches harmful salts down below the root zone of the plants. Drip and flood irrigation are well suited to our conditions. Application of water on the soil surface can prevent accumulation of salts on foliage. A drip system should have a designated valve for your vegetables to allow for best scheduling. Regularly adjust the watering schedule through the seasons. Take advantage of rainwater! Skip watering for a cycle after a good rain.

Learn to recognize the difference between heat stress and water stress.

**Water Stress** • Not enough moisture is available in the soil for the plants to absorb.

**ACTION** - More water is needed, right away.

**Heat Stress** • There is adequate water available to the plant, but transpiration (loss of moisture) exceeds the root system's ability to take up moisture, so the foliage wilts in the hot dry air.

**ACTION** - Provide top mulch and shade. Adding more water may cause the roots to rot. Mulching around your plants during the hot months helps maintain moisture and keep the root systems cooler.

**FERTILIZER** • Use fertilizers according to the plant needs. Usually fertilizers aren't necessary once the plant begins setting fruit. Keeping the organic content of the soil at a good level will enhance the action of the fertilizers, and over time will supply small amounts of nutrients into the soil so less fertilizer is needed.

Fertilizer packaging usually has 3 or 4 numbers which give the percentages of actual forms of nutrients in the bag. For example, 12-10-3-5 Suggest that the fertilizer bag is 12% nitrogen, 10% phosphorus, 3% potassium, and 5% iron, sulfur, magnesium, or whatever else they chose to add to the fertilizer. Fertilizer formulations can be adjusted and applied according to the part of the plant you plan on eating.

**Leafy greens** - Need more forms of Nitrogen (N)

**Roots and Fruits** - Prefer the Phosphorus (P) or fertilizer bags higher in the second number.

**Potassium (K)** - All plants use forms of this nutrient because it helps with water resource management in the plant and increases leaf water holding capacity in times of drought.

If this article has inspired a sense of self-sufficiency in you and you want to get started on your own garden adventures, we are here to help. We have been training and facilitating the art of food for many years. Please let us know how we can help you build a more secure community around food, simply by training you in your own system. If you would like to hear more about our initiatives in food security and community agriculture development please email us for a free brochure.

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Tony McCammon is the founder of Bloom Horticulture Specialists; individuals dedicated to helping landowners connect to the responsibility and stewardship of working with the natural world. Bloom Horticulture offers a full landscape design studio, corporate and HOA consultation division, and community education.

