



# SEED STARTING PLANNER

A Beginner's Guide to Seed Starting Across Canada

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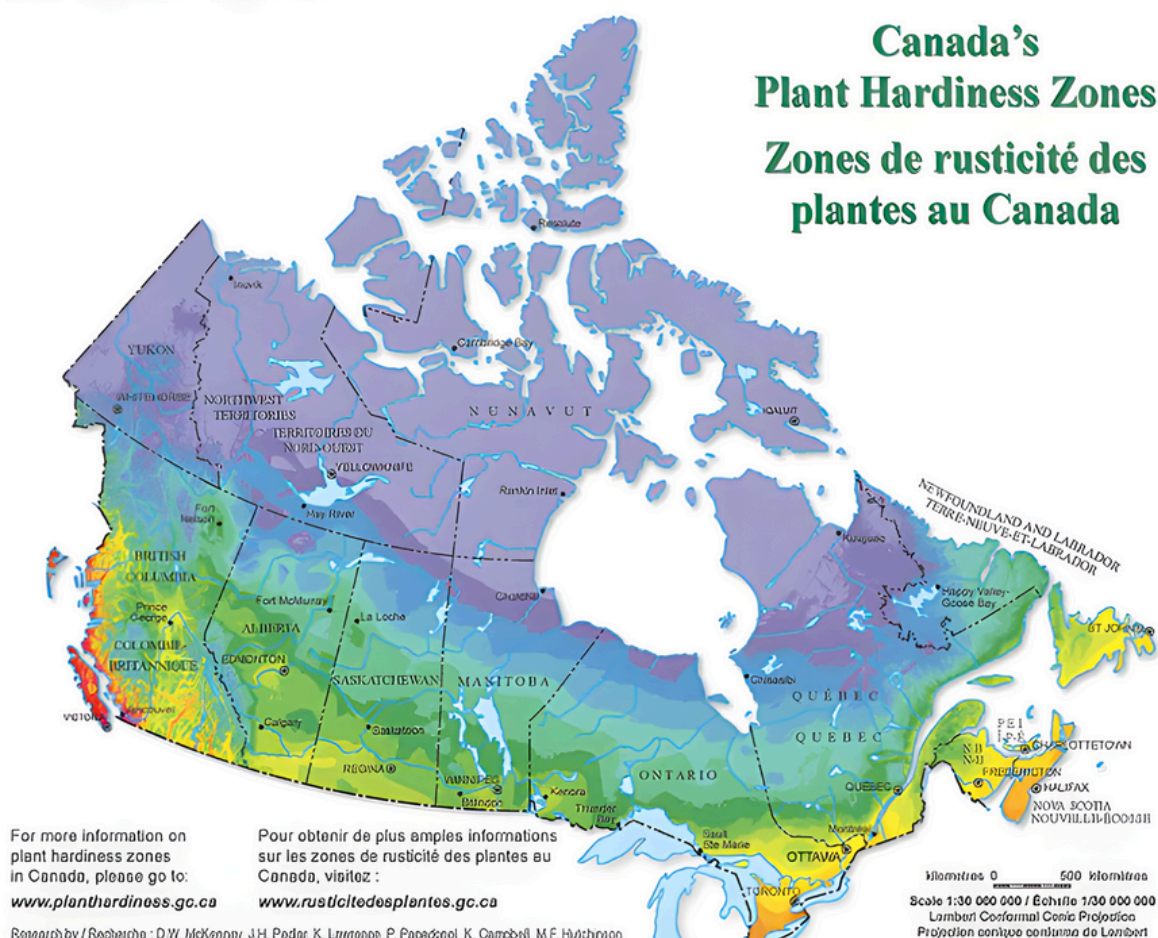


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[www.nciaf.ca](http://www.nciaf.ca)

## Purpose of the Seed-Starting Planner

This national seed-starting planner is designed to make gardening simple and approachable by clearly showing what to start, and when, based on your region's average last frost date. It removes the guesswork for new gardeners and community gardens by translating weeks, dates, and seasons into easy, practical guidance, supported by the image below illustrating Canada's plant hardiness zones and frost-free growing windows. Developed by NCIAF, this tool supports confident planting, stronger harvests, and community-led food sovereignty from the ground up.



Source: <https://planthardiness.gc.ca/?m=1&lang=e>

## How to Calculate Your Seed Starting Timeline

Generally, seeding or transplanting should be scheduled after the risk of frost has passed. Refer to Appendix A for a detailed list of approximate last frost dates to help determine when seedlings are safe to transplant as well as fall frost risk timelines.

To learn how to start seedlings indoors including growing medium, see the *NCIAF Seeding Starting – Zone Three*.



[Seeding Starting – Zone Three](#)

## How to Calculate Your Seed Starting Timeline

### 1 Identify Your Last Frost Date

- Determine your area's "average last frost date" using the map below and Appendix A: [Canada's Regional Frost Zones](#)

### 2 Work Backward to Set Your Start Weeks

- Treat the last frost date as Week 0
- One week earlier = Week 1
- Two weeks earlier = Week 2
- Continue counting backward until reaching Week 12 — this is when seed starting begins.

**Example:** In south Saskatchewan, the closest city is Regina  
Last frost date (week 0) = May 21  
12 weeks earlier = February 26  
**Start Weeks: Last weeks of February**

### 3 Create a Seed Starting Plan

- Use the schedule below to determine which seeds to start each week
- Record the plan in a garden notebook or planner to stay organized

### Helpful Tips

There are few odd-numbered weeks in this schedule because most seeds have flexible planting windows. Seeds listed for Week 12 can usually be started in Week 11, Week 10 seeds can be started in Week 9, and so on.

As planting time approaches, use practical judgment based on weather conditions. Some seasons are colder or warmer than average, so the actual planting week may shift slightly earlier or later.

Week 0 should be treated as a target date rather than a fixed rule, since weather does not always follow the calendar.

Another useful practice is to write the seed-starting plan in a daily planner or garden planner so it is not overlooked. Keeping it written down increases the likelihood of staying on schedule.

## START THESE PLANTS AT 10-12 WEEKS BEFORE LAST FROST

### Full Sun

- ☐ Artichokes
- ☐ Brussel Sprouts
- ☐ Chives\*
- ☐ Leeks
- ☐ Onions from Seed
- ☐ Peppers
- ☐ Strawberries (everbearing)
- ☐ Strawberries (June-bearing)
- ☐ Tomatoes

### Full Sun/Partial Shade

- ☐ Asparagus
- ☐ Celery
- ☐ Rosemary

\* Can also be direct-sown

## START THESE PLANTS AT 8-10 WEEKS BEFORE LAST FROST

### Full Sun

- ☐ Chives
- ☐ Coneflower
- ☐ Eggplant
- ☐ Larkspur (delphinium)\*
- ☐ Mint
- ☐ Oregano
- ☐ Parsley
- ☐ Rudbeckia
- ☐ Sage
- ☐ Thyme
- ☐ Yarrow (medicinal)

\* Can also be direct-sown

## START THESE PLANTS AT 6-8 WEEKS BEFORE LAST FROST

### Full Sun

- ☐ Aster
- ☐ Bachelor's Buttons (Cornflower)\*
- ☐ Basil
- ☐ Bergamot
- ☐ Celiosa
- ☐ Chamomile\*
- ☐ Feverfew\*
- ☐ Marigold\*
- ☐ Nigella\*
- ☐ Strawflower
- ☐ Zinnia

### Full Sun/Partial Shade

- ☐ Sweetpeas

\* Can also be direct-sown



## START THESE PLANTS AT 4-6 WEEKS BEFORE LAST FROST

### Full Sun

- Cabbage
- Calendula (medicinal)\*
- Cauliflower
- Fennel\*
- Kale\*
- Melons\*
- Nasturtium
- Pumpkin\*
- Watermelon\*

\* Can also be direct-sown

### Full Sun/Partial Shade

- Lettuce
- Squash

## DIRECT SOW

### Full Sun

- Baby's Breath
- Beans
- Beets
- Borage (medicinal)
- Corn
- Cucumbers
- Garlic (direct sow bulbs in fall)
- Horseradish
- Mustard
- Onions (bulbs)
- Parsnips
- Poppies
- Potatoes (sets & seeds)
- Radishes
- Spinach (4 weeks before last frost)
- Sunflowers
- Swiss Chard
- Turnips
- Zucchini

### Full Sun/Partial Shade

- Arugula
- Asparagus crowns
- Bok Choi
- Carrots
- Cilantro
- Currants (direct plant plug)
- Peas

## RECOMMENDED FLOWERS - HARDY ANNUALS

### Full Sun

- ☐ Snapdragon
- ☐ Cornflower
- ☐ Sweet peas
- ☐ Baby's breath
- ☐ Poppies
- ☐ Calendula
- ☐ Carnation
- ☐ Feverfew
- ☐ Larkspur
- ☐ Stock
- ☐ Chamomile
- ☐ Nigella

## APPENDIX A: Canadian Regional Frost Zones

Province	Location	Last Frost	First Frost
Newfoundland and Labrador	Grand Falls St. John's / Corner Brook	May 21-31	October 1-10 October 11-20
Nova Scotia	Halifax Kentville Shelburne Sydney Yarmouth	April 21-30 May 11-20 May 1-10 May 11-20 April 21-30	October 11-20 October 1-10 September 11-20 October 11-20 October 11-20
Prince Edward Island	Charlottetown Summerside Tignish	May 11-20 May 21-30 May 1-10	October 11-20 October 1-10 October 1-10
New Brunswick	Bathurst Edmunston Fredericton Grand Falls Moncton Saint John	May 11-20	September 21-30 September 21-30 September 21-30 September 21-30 October 1-10 October 21-30
Quebec	Baie-Comeau Chicoutimi Montréal Québec City Rimouski Sherbrooke Trois-Rivières Thetford Mines	May 21-31 April 21-31 April 21-30 May 1-10 May 11-20 May 11-20 May 11-20 May 11-20	September 11-20 September 11-20 October 1-10 September 21-30 October 11-20 September 21-30 September 21-30 September 21-30
Ontario	Barrie Hamilton Kingston London Ottawa Owen Sound Parry Sound Peterborough St. Catharines Sudbury Thunder Bay Timmins Toronto Windsor	May 11-20 May 1-10 April 21-30 May 1-10 May 1-10 May 1-10 May 1-10 May 21-31 May 1-10 May 21-30 May 11-20 June 21-31 June 1-10 May 11-20 April 11-20	October 1-10 October 11-20 October 1-10 October 1-10 October 1-10 October 1-10 October 1-10 September 11-20 September 21-30 November 1-10 September 21-30 September 11-20 September 11-15 November 1-10 October 21-31
Manitoba	Brandon The Pas Thompson Winnipeg	May 21-31 May 21-31 June 11-20 May 21-31	September 11-20 September 11-20 August 11-20 September 21-30
Saskatchewan	Prince Albert / Saskatoon Regina / Moose Jaw	May 21-31 May 11-20	September 11-20
Alberta	Athabasca Calgary Edmonton Grande Prairie Lethbridge Medicine Hat Red Deer	May 21-31 May 11-20 May 1-10 May 11-20 May 21-31 May 11-20 May 11-20	September 1-10 September 11-20 September 11-20 September 1-10 September 1-10 September 21-30 September 11-20

## APPENDIX A: Canadian Regional Frost Zones

Province	Location	Last Frost	First Frost
British Columbia	Chilliwack Dawson Creek Kamloops Kelowna Nanaimo Port Alberni Prince George Terrace Vancouver Vernon Victoria	April 1-10 May 11-20 May 1-10 April 21-30 April 1-10 May 1-10 May 21-31 May 11-20 March 21-31 April 11-20 March 1-10	November 11-20 September 11-20 October 1-10 October 21-31 November 1-10 October 11-20 September 11-20 October 11-20 November 11-20 October 21-31 November 11-20
Territories	Whitehorse Dawson City Yellowknife	June 10-20 June 10-15 May 25-30	August 20-28 Aug. 29 – Sept. 5 September 10-17