

Scheduling Production of Florida Vegetables¹

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Experienced vegetable growers have learned to time the harvest period of the crops that they grow to avoid unfavorable weather and to take advantage of market windows. On the other hand, when alternative or new crops are introduced into a production area, there may be little information or experience on which to base planting schedules and projected harvests. Likewise, new growers or experienced growers of other crops may have difficulty in determining the correct planting date of a new crop for a particular market.

Many commercial seed catalogs provide days to maturity data as part of variety descriptions. These data correct for the area where the evaluation occurred, most commonly California or the northern United States. Unfortunately, days to harvest listed in seed catalogs may be quite misleading for Florida growers.

Pumpkin production for Halloween is an excellent example of this situation. The market is fixed as the last two weeks of October and the product is fairly perishable under unprotected Florida conditions. Therefore, it is important to have the crop in prime condition for harvest on about October 15. Most pumpkins varieties listed in seed catalogs have from 100 to 120 days required for maturity. Using

this information, pumpkins should be planted from June 15 to July 5. However, in trials conducted in central Florida, pumpkins required only 82 to 85 days from seeding and 79 days from transplanting to reach maturity. This means that seeding July 20 or transplanting on July 26 would result in an October 15 harvest. Accordingly, there is a two to five week discrepancy between listed times to maturity and actual times to maturity under Florida summer conditions.

Many Florida production areas have distinct fall and spring seasons, and time to maturity is usually less for the fall season than for the spring season. For example, cucumbers, from seeding, at Leesburg required an average of 57 day for the spring crop but only 45 days for the fall crop. At Bradenton, tomatoes required an average of 90 days in the spring and 84 days from transplanting in the fall.

Time of maturity within a production season varies from south to north on the peninsula. For example, peppers in the spring season required 94 days at Boynton Beach, 84 days at Immokalee, 75 days at Bradenton, and 74 days at Quincy from transplanting. Even though all of these plantings were for the spring season harvest, plantings were later in the season from southerly to northerly locations, and

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growing conditions improved as the season progressed, thereby reducing the number of days from transplanting to first harvest.

In addition to the seasonal and geographic effects on maturity, varieties of nearly all vegetables may be classed as being early, midseason, or late in maturity. In some crops, early varieties may mature as much as a week or two earlier than late varieties.

Because of the discrepancy between published and actual time to maturity and seasonal and site variations in days to maturity, the accompanying data were compiled from the annual Florida Agricultural Experiment Station Circulars on vegetable variety trial results that are listed in the References section. Note that the days to harvest is for the earliest-maturing varieties. When more than one year's data are available, the days to harvest is an average. The range in days to maturity occurs because of year to year variation in weather and variation of planting time within a production season.

References

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Table 1. Days to first harvest, by season of harvest and method of stand establishment, for vegetables at several Florida locations.

Vegetable	Location	Crop Establishment ¹	For Harvest ²	No. of Observations	Days to Harvest	
					Range	Average
BLACK BEAN	Ft. Pierce	S	W	1	-	97
	Ft. Pierce	S	S	2	93-94	94
BUSH BEAN	Delray Beach	S	W	8	60-67	64
	Delray Beach	S	S	5	48-55	51
	Delray Beach	S	F	2	45	64
	Ft. Pierce	S	F	1	-	61
	Homestead	S	S	4	58-66	61
	Quincy	S	S	1	-	50
	Quincy	S	F	1	-	50
BROCCLOI	Belle Glade	S	W	1	-	75
	Belle Glade	S	S	1	-	79
	Bradenton	T	F	1	-	46
	Bradenton	T	W	2	52-55	54
	Bradenton	T	S	2	47	47
	Gainesville	T	F	3	50-69	63
	Gainesville	T	S	4	49-55	52
	Quincy	T	F	6	48-54	51
	Quincy	T	S	7	47-61	55
CABBAGE	Bradenton	T	W	2	52-59	56
	Ft. Pierce	T	W	1	-	58
	Sanford	T	W	4	75-90	84
CANTALOUPE	Bradenton	T	S	2	66-77	72
	Gainesville	S	S	4	82-96	87
	Leesburg	S	S	17	50-99	83
	Quincy	S	S	5	70-88	77
CARROT	Zellwood	S	W	3	118-129	124
CAULIFLOWER	Bradenton	T	W	7	37-64	37-64
	Bradenton	T	F	4	44-67	44-67
	Bradenton	T	S	4	44-62	44-62
	Gainesville	T	F	1	-	-
	Sanford	T	W	1	-	-
CELERY	Belle Glade	T	F	13	84-103	91
	Belle Glade	T	S	13	78-93	82
	South Bay	T	W	1	-	98
	South Bay	T	S	1	-	99
CHINESE CABBAGE (Napa)	Belle Glade	S	W	2	74-77	76
	Belle Glade	S	F	1	-	55
	Belle Glade	S	S	1	-	83
	Bradenton	T	F	1	-	70
	Quincy	T	F	2	67-69	68
CHINESE CABBAGE (Pak-choi)	Bradenton	T	F	1	-	42
	Quincy	T	F	2	41-42	42
COLLARD	Quincy	T	F	4	41-72	56
	Quincy	T	S	8	50-97	70

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Table 1. Days to first harvest, by season of harvest and method of stand establishment, for vegetables at several Florida locations.

CUCUMBER (slicing)	Bradenton	T	F	1	-	29
	Leesburg	S	S	12	37-67	57
	Leesburg	S	F	6	40-50	45
	Sanford	S	S	3	44-51	48
	Sanford	S	F	2	42-48	45
CUCUMBER (pickling)	Leesburg	S	S	10	44-59	55
	Leesburg	S	F	1	-	37
EGGPLANT	Bradenton	T	S	2	75-90	83
LEEK	Bradenton	T	S	3	95-143	112
LETTUCE (Crisphead)	Belle Glade	S	S	7	70-93	75
LETTUCE (Romaine)	Belle Glade	S	S	2	75-78	77
	Belle Glade	S	F	1	-	65
OKRA	Bradenton	S	S	2	53-54	54
ONION	Belle Glade	S	S	1	-	155
	Bradenton	S	S	1	-	162
	Bradenton	T	S	1	-	123
	Gainesville	S	S	1	-	220
	Leesburg	S	S	1	-	189
	Leesburg	T	S	1	-	182
	Quincy	T	S	2	78-97	88
PEA (snap)	Bradenton	S	S	1	-	42
	Gainesville	S	S	1	-	47
PEA (Snow)	Bradenton	S	S	2	42-49	46
	Gainesville	S	S	1	-	61
PEA (Southern)	Ft. Pierce	S	S	3	84-101	94
PEPPER (Bell)	Bownton	T	F	1	-	94
	Beach	T	S	8	62-92	75
	Bradenton	S	S	5	113-121	116
	Delray Beach	S	F	1	-	92
	Delray Beach	S	W	4	113-133	118
	Delray Beach	T	F	1	-	59
	Ft. Pierce	T	S	5	77-96	84
	Immokalee	T	F	3	68-74	71
	Immokalee	T	W	1	-	85
	Immokalee	T	S	2	70-78	74
	Quincy	T	S	2	70-78	74
PEPPER (Cubanelle)	Delray Beach	S	S	3	96-118	103
POTATO	Hastings	S	S	16	97-114	106
	Homestead	S	S	1	-	104
PUMPKIN	Bradenton	S	F	1	-	83
	Bradenton	T	F	2	78-79	79
	Leesburg	S	F	2	81-82	82
	Sanford	S	F	1	-	85
SQUASH (Winter)	Leesburg	S	S	8	84-100	91
SQUASH (Summer)	Ft. Pierce	S	F	1	-	35
	Leesburg	S	S	19	44-64	47

Table 1. Days to first harvest, by season of harvest and method of stand establishment, for vegetables at several Florida locations.

SWEET CORN	Belle Glade	S	S	4	63-83	71
	Belle Glade	S	F	2	64-71	68
	Bradenton	S	F	1	-	63
	Bradenton	S	S	7	49-60	56
	Palm Beach	S	S	1	-	71
	Sanford	S	S	1	-	77
	Zellwood	S	S	9	61-109	73
RADICCHIO	Bradenton	T	S	1	-	63
	Bradenton	T	F	1	-	63
RADISH	Belle Glade	S	W	4	25-38	33
	Belle Glade	S	S	4	21-29	24
	Belle Glade	S	F	6	27-49	33
STRAWBERRY	Dover	T	FW	8	46-103	67
	Gainesville	T	W	3	119-148	137
	Quincy	T	S	3	147-171	162
TOMATO	Bradenton	T	S	8	81-101	90
	Bradenton	T	F	10	73-90	84
	Ft. Pierce	T	S	8	70-81	75
	Ft. Pierce	T	F	8	72-103	82
	Gainesville	T	S	2	84-91	88
	Homestead	T	W	1	-	86
	Immokalee	T	S	5	85-105	94
	Immokalee	T	F	5	71-89	83
	Quincy	T	S	6	78-91	83
	Quincy	T	F	1	-	71
TOMATO (Cherry)	Bradenton	T	S	2	75-78	77
	Bradenton	T	F	3	63-79	71
WATERMELON	Leesburg	S	S	14	78-112	97
	Live Oak	S	S	1	-	94
	Immokalee	S	S	6	85-127	108
	Quincy	S	S	7	71-95	85
WATERMELON (Icebox)	Bradenton	T	S	3	73-86	78
	Leesburg	S	S	2	77-109	93
	Live Oak	S	S	1	-	91
	Immokalee	T	S	2	83-85	84
WATERMELON (Seedless)	Bradenton	T	S	1	-	93
	Leesburg	T	S	3	102-112	105
	Quincy	T	S	1	-	88

¹S=direct seeding, T=transplanting.²For harvest in the fall (F=Oct, Nov, Dec); winter (W=Jan, Feb, Mar); or spring (S=Apr, May, June).