

## Ahhh! Why is my Garden not growing???

Well, not that it necessarily helps but you're not alone! Fortunately, the answers might be easier than you think, and most will land squarely in one of two places: 1. Weather 2. New beds. We've all experienced plants that pop up and then stall out, turning yellow and going nowhere fast, if at all.

### WEATHER:

Every year, there is something that will happen with Oregon weather that is not particularly good for gardening! Remember a couple of years ago when we had super-hot weather followed by days of choking smoke? My own garden had more than a few unhappy plants after all that – but survived it while giving a moderate harvest. Last year and this year we had similar situations, a spring that felt like it would never come, and snow in April is definitely not our norm! So, what do you do?

First off, we need to understand how temperature affects vegetable gardening, as it is this and not the calendar that should determine when it is time to garden! Almost all vegetables like stable weather and warm conditions, which is why we garden in the summer here in the Willamette Valley. Most plants are far less picky about day-time temperatures than they are about night-time temperatures and soil temperatures. A lot of our garden crops really like night-time temperatures to reliably stay above 50 degrees Fahrenheit and soil temperatures to be warmer yet! Many vegetables like tomatoes and cucumbers will not germinate until temperatures are well above 60 in the soil and preferably 70-80 degrees ideally. This is a built-in mechanism to make sure that they only start growing once it is warm enough for them to thrive. Think of it this way, most of us have planted tomatoes early and watched them grow very slowly only to have volunteers from last year pop out of the ground several weeks to a month later and overtake the plants we put in. That is temperature deciding how things will grow!

Your best bet to avoid disaster is a soil thermometer. (You can use any thermometer, but one for measuring soil temperature is usually dedicated and not used for checking your kid for a fever or to see if the roast is done...) To check, excavate a small hole 2-3 inches deep and check. Make sure that the temperature is warm enough for the plants you are planting, or permanent dwarfing or complete failure could easily occur. This means an absolute minimum of 50-60 degrees for most transplants, and even warmer for most seeded vegetables. Keep in mind, that big swings in temperature also makes for really unhappy vegetables. Remember in late April and up to mid-May how every week we were jumping from one extreme to another, with many nights dipping into the low 40s and even upper 30s? Your early-planted vegetables do. By making sure that the soil has warmed to a safe depth we can avoid much of the instability.

### New Beds:

There has been a huge uptake in people gardening in raised beds and there are huge advantages. Raised beds are far easier to care for without so much kneeling, the soil is loose and workable, and often it warms up in the spring more quickly than the soil in the ground. But there are things to watch out for. Raised beds experience much greater temperature swings in unstable weather than the ground does, they utilize organic based soil mediums which require a little heavier doses of fertilizer and they can dry

out a little faster than regular garden soil while still being susceptible to over-watering in at times. As new beds tend to have slightly looser soils than older beds, these conditions can be amplified in a newly installed bed.

So how do we overcome these?

Check your temperature in raised beds a little deeper, say 3-4 inches instead of 2-3, that will help to insure that it's not just the surface soil that has warmed up. This is important because surface soils can also cool much faster in raised beds when night-time temperatures drop unexpectedly. I recently (June 17) spoke with a group of gardeners from Roseburg Oregon that had the exact same concerns, as their veggies were almost all dwarfed and yellowed. A few had gotten their gardens in later than normal and they were doing great, but they were concerned there wouldn't be time for a good harvest. To the first group went the bad news, 'You may have got started a little early, and your best bet is to restart.' To the second group went better news, 'Yes, there is plenty of time for you to get a great harvest.'

So, for best success this year and in the future: Check your soil temperature at a reasonable depth. Watch weather forecasts for warming night-time temperatures. Remember that raised beds are a little more susceptible to weather fluctuations than in-ground plantings. Use plenty of fertilizers, especially in raised beds. Water evenly – not too much or too little – every garden is different. If crops fail, you can almost always start over well into summer, especially with crops that are seeded. Remember that tomatoes and peppers are a very long season crops and are usually planted indoors before the last frost date, but tomatoes especially can often grow surprisingly fast and still provide decent crops when seeded late May into June. Read seed packages, they often contain a wealth of information!

For more information on success in raised beds, please read this article: [HERE](#)

Here's to a great harvest despite the weather!

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