

2026-07-09 Edible Gardening Workshop – Greg Grant

Presentation Overview

- **Title:** Summer Harvest & Planting: Picking & Grinning in the Heat
- **Presenter:** Greg Grant, Ph.D., Smith County Horticulturist
- **Organization:** Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (Tyler, Texas)

1. Helpful Gardening Resources

- **Aggie Horticulture:** Texas A&M Department of Horticultural Sciences
([<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>])(<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>)
 - Features "Vegetable Resources" and Easy Gardening Fact Sheets
- **Jerry Parsons' Plant Answers:**
[www.plantanswers.com](<https://www.plantanswers.com>)
- **Mail-Order Seed Sources:**
 - Willhite Seed (Poolville, Texas) — willhiteseed.com
 - Twilley Seed (Hodges, South Carolina) — twilleyseed.com

2. Crop Spotlight: Southern Peas (*Vigna unguiculata*)

- **Characteristics:** Hot-weather legumes native to Africa. They are easy to grow, highly productive, and nutritious. They are distinct from cool-season English peas and are closer relatives to beans.
- **Varieties listed:**
 - *Black-eyed:* California #5, California #46
 - *Cream:* Lady Finger, Texas Cream #40, Mississippi Cream, Zipper Cream (crowder), Texas Cream #8
 - *Crowder:* Black Crowder, Mississippi Silver Skin, Brown Crowder, Zipper Cream, Knuckle
 - *Purple Hull:* Knuckle (crowder), Texas Pinkeye, Mississippi Pinkeye, Top Pick, Quick Pick
 - *Other:* Ozark Razorback, Yard Long Beans

- **Soil Preparation:** Remove weeds/trash; till soil 8 to 10 inches deep. Avoid tilling wet soil. Ensure areas drain well.
- **Planting:** Plant after the last frost (March in South Texas; April or later in North Texas); a second crop can be planted as late as July. Create raised rows 4–6 inches high and 16–24 inches wide (rows spaced 36 inches apart). Plant seeds $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep, then thin seedlings to 6–8 inches apart once they reach 3–4 inches tall.

3. General Harvesting, Handling, and Storage Tips

- **Size Matters:** Bigger is not always better; "baby" veggies are often best. Use the grocery produce section as a maximum size guide to avoid growing "livestock feed" size produce.
- **Quality Management:** Vegetables continue their life processes after picking. Slow down mature vegetable deterioration by chilling. Keep immature produce (like green tomatoes) at room temperature to enhance ripening.
- **Interrupting Sugar-to-Starch Conversion:** For crops like sweet corn and peas, cool immediately after harvest. Harvest early in the morning or right before use.
- **Storage Environment Keys:** Temperature, moisture, and ventilation are vital. Leafy vegetables need high humidity (~95%), while onions require dry storage. Discard any decaying produce instantly. Keep a record of planting dates and cultivars.

4. The Top 3 Production Problems

1. Not enough sunlight.
 2. Not enough fertilizer.
 3. Planting at the wrong time.
- *Note:* Shade is **not** the solution for hot temperatures; vegetables require a full day of sun.

5. Fertilization Strategy ("What do I ACTUALLY do??")

- **Pre-plant Fertilization:** Apply a complete lawn fertilizer (e.g., 18-6-12, 28-3-12) *before* planting at a rate of 2 lbs per 100 sq. ft. (or 35 feet of row). Use 2 teaspoons per sq. ft. for small plots. Soil tests are highly recommended.
- **Sidedressing:** Apply chicken litter, cow manure, or 1 cup of high-nitrogen fertilizer (e.g., 21-0-0) per 35 feet of row every few weeks while plants are growing.

- **Soil Amendment:** Regularly add organic matter, utilize cover crops, and apply lime as needed.
- **Frequency Guide:**
 - *Pre-plant:* Every single crop planted.
 - *Sidedress (Tomatoes and Greens):* Lightly every two weeks.
 - *Sidedress (Beans and Peas):* Never.
 - *Sidedress (All other crops):* 1 to 3 times.
- *Rule of thumb:* Leaves should remain large, healthy, and dark green. It is better to apply too little fertilizer more frequently than too much at one time.

6. The Three Texas Gardening Seasons

I. Cool Season (Winter)

- **Definition:** Plants that can tolerate frosts.
- **Crops:** Beets, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Cilantro, Collards, Dill, English/Snow Peas, Garlic, Kale, Lettuce, Mustard, Onions, Parsley, Radishes, Spinach, Swiss Chard, Turnips/Greens.
- **Planting Windows:** Late winter/early spring (around February) and late summer/early fall (around September).

II. Warm Season (Spring and Fall)

- **Definition:** Plants that cannot tolerate frosts or intense heat.
- **Crops:** Basil, Beans (green & shell), Cantaloupe, Corn, Cucumber, Eggplant, Peppers, Potatoes (Irish — famously planted on Valentine's Day), Pumpkin, Squash (summer/winter), Tomato, Watermelon.
- **Planting Windows:** Immediately after the final frost (generally April) for spring. Plant again in July for a fall crop (watering is mandatory). Waiting past July typically results in zero production before the first frost around November 15.

III. Hot Season (Summer)

- **Definition:** Plants that cannot tolerate frost and thrive in 90+ degree temperatures.
- **Crops:** Asparagus (harvest must stop in May), Okra, Southern Peas, Hot Peppers (like Tabasco), Rosemary, Sugar Cane, Sweet Potatoes.

- **Planting Windows:** Mid-April when nights become warm. A second crop of Southern peas can be planted in early July. Do not plant these after July, as they will not grow or ripen if temperatures drop.

7. Operational Space Tips & Outreach

- **Space Requirements:** Certain crops require large areas, blocks, or rows.
 - *Corn:* Requires at least 3 rows to achieve proper wind pollination.
 - *Mass production:* Southern peas, beans, or anything intended for canning, freezing, and preserving require substantial row setups.
- **Where to follow Greg Grant ("Weed it and Reap"):**
 - **Blog:** arborgate.com
 - **Facebook:** "Greg Grant Gardens"
 - **Newspaper:** Tyler Morning Telegraph (Sundays)
 - **Magazine Column:** *Texas Gardener* (In Greg's Garden)
 - **Books Authored/Co-authored:** *Heirloom Gardening in the South*, *The Rose Rustlers*, and *Texas Fruit and Vegetable Gardening*.