

Planting rules – local folklore

Planting for your climate region can be challenging especially with climate change, droughts and floods, and mini climates in your particular region. All the planting charts in our previous region of Northern California and Southern Oregon suggested planting for lower elevations with little to no snow, and yet we had a 90-days growing season at best, that would go from 100-degree temps to below freezing in just a few weeks at either end of the season.

Over time we began learning local customs and folk tales that helped with our success in these extreme climates. Sandwiched between the 10K ft coast mountains and 14k ft volcano, Mt. Shasta was no easy place to grow organic gardens. Within a few miles the geography went from an alpine valley capable of dropping 4-5 feet of snow in one weekend, to open high-prairie with sage brush and pinion pines. One local legend was that when all the snow had melted off the north slope of Black Butte (a small cinder cone in the valley), that was the time to plant. Another local custom brought by Italian immigrants who had experience growing on volcanic soil, was to store water in barrels to bring it to air temperature before watering tomatoes and other plants that required warm soil since the well water was always frigid and would lower the soil temps. We always planted our beans too late afraid of late freezes in the spring, until someone pointed out that the sweet peas were always the 1st things to come up and that the beans and peas should follow suit.

Here are a few more ideas ... check with the locals and nurseys in a new region to learn the local customs.

- Wait for apple trees to bloom before planting bush beans.
- When the apple blossoms fall, plant pole beans and cucumbers.
- By the time the lilacs are in full bloom, it will be safe to plant tender annual flowers and squashes.
- Transfer tomato transplants to the garden when lily-of-the-valley is in full flower.
- Full-sized maple leaves signal time to plant morning glory seeds.
- Peppers and eggplant can be transplanted when the bearded irises are blooming.
- When peonies blossom, it is safe to plant heat-loving melons, such as cantaloupe.