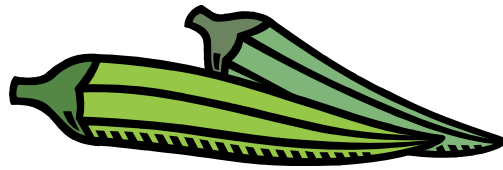


Plant Lima Beans, Okra, and Brussels Sprouts in May



Now is the time to plan for a late summer harvest of lima beans, okra and Brussels sprouts. Lima beans prefer warmer weather than green beans and germinate best at soil temperatures of 65 degrees F or higher. Climbing or pole varieties, like 'King of the Garden,' produce flattened butterbean-shaped cream-colored seed and may take up to 88 days to produce. Plant in hills three feet apart with three to four seeds per hill, training vines up poles tied together in a tripod. 'Speckled Calico' ripens 10 days earlier, producing large colorful beans with a full-bodied flavor. Heat-tolerant vines will produce well throughout the summer.

'Henderson Bush Lima,' 'Baby Fordhook Bush Lima,' 'Thorogreen,' and 'Fordhook 242' are all popular bush varieties of lima beans that will mature 10 to 20 days earlier than most pole varieties. 'Baby Fordhook Bush Lima' will produce plump, potato-shaped seed, while 'Henderson's Bush Lima' produces the more common butterbean-shaped beans. 'Fordhook 242' is fairly heat tolerant. Plant all bush varieties in rows 2.5 to 3 feet apart with seed 3 inches apart within the row.

For fresh limas, harvest when pods are plump and still green. For dry beans, harvest when pods are yellow. Cut vines at the soil surface and allow them to dry in small piles. Harvest pods when dry enough to shell.

Okra is a popular crop for long hot summers. Like lima beans, plant when soil temperature is 65 degrees F or higher. Neither lima beans nor okra will tolerate frost. Okra plants will grow relatively tall and bushy. Plant in rows 3 to 4 feet apart. Thin plants to 12 inches apart within the row. Dwarf and semi-dwarf okra varieties may grow 2 to 3 feet tall. 'Cajun Delight' is relatively early and very productive. Pods are dark green and slow to toughen. 'Annie Oakley II' will mature in about 80 days. Pick pods when 3 to 4 inches long. Harvest okra pods six days after flowers open. Waiting longer can result in tough, fibrous pods. Harvest pods daily to ensure top quality.

Although a cool season crop, Brussels sprouts can be direct-seeded in early May to mature in the fall. Plant in rows 3 feet apart with 18 inches between plants. Sprouts will mature from the ground up. Pick in the fall when sprouts are firm and well formed, breaking leaves off the plant where sprouts are harvested. Early sprouts harvested in warmer weather may be loose due to faster growing conditions. Popular varieties include 'Oliver', 'Diablo', 'Hybrid Bubbles', and 'Hybrid Jade Cross'.

This article adapted from Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA. Please contact Ken Churches at cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu or (209) 754-6475 with your agricultural questions. To speak with a Certified Master Gardener: Calaveras (209) 754-2880, Tuolumne (209) 533-5696, Amador (209) 223-6837, El Dorado (530) 621-5543.