



SAN MIGUEL BASIN
 COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
 EXTENSION

FROST-FREE GROWING SEASONS IN SAN MIGUEL BASIN AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES AND HARDINESS OF VEGETABLES AND FLOWERS

Microclimates vary widely in the mountains. Often, the tops of sloping areas absorb more heat from the sun and allow cold air to drain off and so are a bit warmer than low-lying areas where frost can settle and are colder.

FROST-FREE GROWING SEASONS IN SMB & SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

Community	Dates of average 'Frost-free' Growing Season	Comments
		Frost Free 'Growing Seasons' are based on average (50% chance) last 32.5° F frost in the spring and first 32.5° F frost in the fall. **See Colorado Climate Summaries for official weather station data.
Norwood	June 9 – September 21 (104 days)**	The newest data reduced this by a week for first fall frost.
Redvale	Beginning of June through September/October*	May have slightly longer season with warmer daytime temperatures than Norwood*
Nucla	Beginning of June through September/October*	Somewhat cooler than Naturita but warmer and longer season than Norwood*
Naturita	Beginning of June through September/October*	Warmer, longer season than Norwood*
Paradox East	May 14- September 24 (133 days)**	
Paradox West	May 8- October 5 (150 days)**	Paradox/Bedrock have two weather stations
Telluride	June 28 -August 31 (64 days)**	Some locals use June 15th as the average last frost. **
Placerville	July 19- August 15 (27 days)**	This is a short-season for an area referred to as the 'banana belt'*. I question the reliability of this data.



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		There seems to be a problem on the graphs.
Mountain Village/Ophir		There isn't any official data for Mountain Village or Ophir. Local input would be valued.
Uravan	May 2 – October 13 (164 days)**	No town there but there is a weather station, and this is the longest frost free growing season in the area!
Rico	July 1- Aug. 31 (61 days)**	
Ridgway	June 21- September 8 (79 days)**	Ridgway can have hard freezes in the summer months* (Ridgway Community Garden)
Ouray	May 29 – September 26 (120 days)**	Locals traditionally plant out on Memorial Day weekend *
Silverton	July 12 – August 15 (34 days)**	This is a big change (from 9 to 34 frost free days) from past data

* Anecdotal, based on local opinion, not data—can still be valuable information

** Data from 50++ years from weather stations (1948-2005)

HARDINESS OF ANNUAL FLOWERS

Hardy annual flowers**	Tolerate cold soils and light frosts	Can plant out 4 weeks before average last spring frost date	Pansies, snap dragons, sweet alyssum, calendula, dusty miller, poppies, ornamental kale and cabbage
Half-hardy annual flowers	Tolerate cool soils but not frosts	Can plant outside 2 weeks before average last spring frost date	Geranium, dianthus, lobelia, ageratum, petunias, gazanias
Tender annual flowers	Need warm soil and don't tolerate frosts	Wait to plant outside 1-several weeks past last average spring frost	Zinnia, salvia, begonia, coleus, vinca, impatiens
Perennials		Check hardiness ratings and pair with your hardiness zone	

* Annuals complete their lifecycle in a single year. They won't come back from the roots or crown the next year, but they may re-seed.

** Cool season annuals may decline in summer heat



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HARDINESS OF VEGETABLE CROPS

Cool-season hardy annual vegetables*	Can tolerate 24-28 degrees F	Corn salad, arugula, spinach, broccoli, Chinese cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, turnip, parsnip, salsify, brussel sprouts, fava beans, leeks, garlic, some onions
Cool-season semi-hardy annual vegetables*	Can tolerate 28-32 degrees F	Beets, carrots, cauliflower, lettuce, onion, peas, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard, endive, radicchio, kale, mustards
Warm-season annual vegetables that do not tolerate frost	Cannot tolerate temperatures <32	Beans, corn, peppers, eggplants, melons, pumpkins**, winter squash**, tomatoes***, melons***, pumpkins***
Warm-season annual vegetables that do not tolerate frost	<50 degrees F decreases quality	Sweet potatoes, basil

* Don't do well in heat of summer—plant before last frost date or leave in garden after first frosts and have better quality when grown with light frosts.

** Can withstand some light frosts if followed by warm day temperatures

*** Ripen further after harvesting when semi-ripe



This Informational Sheet was compiled by Yvette Henson, Extension Director and Agriculture, Natural Resources and Horticulture Agent for San Miguel Basin. For other Fact Sheets or information on growing 'High and Dry' (at high altitude with water limitations) come by our office at 1120 Summit Street (across from the Fairgrounds) in Norwood, call (970) 327-4393, email Yvette.Henson@colostate.edu or maryw@sanmiguelcountyco.gov or visit our website at <http://sanmiguel.extension.colostate.edu/>.

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