homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TUESDAY, March 17, 1942

QUESTION BOX

Where go for information on victory gardens?
How deep to plant vegetable seeds?
How thick to plant?
When to plant?
Date of last spring frost?

ANSWERS FROM

plant scientists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Questions, questions and more questions today from victory gardeners about growing vegetables. Questions from gardeners who have enlisted to help their country by raising the fruits and vegetables their families need this year. Lots of questions.

The first one has come from many gardeners. The question is: "Where can I get information on war gardens, 1942 model,- or victory gardens, as I believe they are now called?"

The answer is: Write to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. and ask for a brand-new publication called "Victory Gardens." This publication is free while the free supply lasts. Just send a postcard asking for your copy of "Victory Gardens." Address the card to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

Now while you're waiting for your copy of "Victory Gardens" here are questions from gardeners with answers from plant scientists.

One question is: "How many inches deep should I plant vegetable seed?"

The answer is: That depends on the kind of seed, the kind of soil, and the season. Many of the greens--lettuce, kale, spinach and mustard, for example--have little seeds that go in under just a half inch of soil. Carrot, onion and radish seed also go just a half inch down in the soil. Beans need to go deeper--from an inch to an inch and a half. The same for pumpkin and squash. As for

peas and corn, they go deepest of all--from 2 to 3 inches.

Soil and season also affect the rule of how far down. In light sandy soil plant seeds deeper than in heavy soil. And late in the season plant all seeds deeper than early in the season.

Here's another letter. It asks: "How thick should I plant vegetable seeds?"

Again the answer is: It depends on the kind of vegetable seed. The new publication on victory gardens has a chart that tells exactly how many inches apart to plant every different kind of vegetable. But here are some general rules: Small seeds like carrot seed, onion seed, collard, parsnip, spinach and turnip seed can go into the ground rather thickly because many of these seeds fail to produce good plants. And you can thin out the extra plants before they crowd each other. But bean and pea seeds should go in the ground a foot or two apart--as the plants are to stand. You never thin rows of beans or peas. Seeds of beet and chard should go in no thicker than the plants are to stand, but even so, you'll probably have to do some thinning. The "seeds" of beet and chard are really fruits that contain several seeds. So several plants may grow from what seems like just one seed.

As for cabbage plants and onion and tomato plants, and onion sets, you plant them, too, where they are going to stay. Those are general rules. Your copy of "Victory Gardens" or any other good garden bulletin will give you the exact details in inches.

Plant scientists are urging gardeners not to plant seeds too thickly, especially this year. Most gardeners waste seed this way, and seed is too precious to waste this year. Planting too thick is a waste of your time and labor, too. It just means that you'll have to do a great deal of thinning, and you may

get poor growth and poor-quality vegetables from crowding before you have had time to thin them all out. This year every patriotic gardener will remember three rules for saving seed. One is: Don't buy more seed than you need to plant. Another is: Don't plant more seed than you need to get a stand. And the third is: Don't plant the seed too thickly.

Now here's an inquiry about the seeds to plant first in the garden. The letter says: "Which vegetable seeds can go in the ground before the last frost?"

The answer is: Seven hardy vegetables that can stand considerable cold are: peas, lettuce, onion, spinach, turnips, cabbage and potatoes. You can plant these vegetables from a month to 6 weeks before the last frost. Then, from 2 to 4 weeks before the last frost you can plant beets, carrots, chard, mustard, parsnips, radishes--and another row of peas and lettuce.

Don't put in beans, sweet corn, squash or tomato plants until all danger of frost is past. And don't put in lima beans until the ground and the weather are warm.

Now, the last question. A gardener asks how he can find out the date of the last frost in the part of the country where he lives.

You can ask your experienced neighbors, any garden advisors you know, or your State college. Or you can write to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. for a free bulletin that will give you a map of frost dates in different parts of the country.

That finishes the garden questions for today. You'll find answers to other garden questions in the new publication called "Victory Gardens" which is free from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

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