



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

University of Idaho Extension
Extension Educator
Mike Bauer 263-8511

April 3, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**GARDEN PREPARATION AND PLANTING
COOL SEASON CROPS**

Ann Warwick, UI Extension Master Gardener, Bonner County

Successful gardens depend on the quality of the soil in which they are planted. Ideally, the soil should be deep, fertile, and well drained, and should contain organic matter. When squeezed, a handful of moist soil should crumble easily. If it stays together in a sticky ball, the clay content may be too high. If it won't hold together at all, it likely contains too much sand. Luckily, the cure for both of these conditions is the addition of organic matter over a period of time. Fall is the best time to add manures, fallen leaves, or other raw materials to allow time for decay. In spring, add a layer of well composted organic matter to improve soil drainage and ability to hold water and nutrients. If commercial fertilizer is used, till it into the soil before seeding to prevent direct contact with the seed. For a complete soil analysis, contact the extension office (263-8511) for instructions.

Many cool season crops may be planted directly into the garden, even before danger of frost is past. Plant peas to a depth of one to two inches as early as the ground can be worked. Carrots, radishes, and spinach are all frost tolerant and can be direct seeded early in the season. Carrots take longer to germinate; if they are interplanted with a few radishes, the quick growing radishes will keep the row visible. The radishes may be harvested early, leaving the carrots to continue growing. Onion sets may be planted before danger of frost is past. Onions from seed should be started earlier indoors or in a greenhouse, as they require a longer growing season.

Parsnips, parsley and turnips will tolerate frost and can be planted early from seed. Plant lettuce,

beets and chard a couple of weeks later for optimum growth. Cabbage, broccoli and kale can be direct seeded but may germinate better if started indoors several weeks ahead of planting out.

Keep seedbeds evenly moist but not soggy until the plants become visible. As the plants grow, thin those that are too closely situated.

Ann Warwick has been a University of Idaho Master Gardener in Bonner County since 1996.

*University of Idaho, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Idaho counties cooperating.
Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.*