

When the ground dries out we're going to be really busy. Until then we'll patiently await the appearance of peas. With hoes in hands, the young seedlings will get their due care. The heavy rain beat upon the freshly planted garden last week, and there is always the gardener's anxiousness about whether those seeds will rot or sprout.

Late April is still too early to plant the summer vegetables, although the tomatoes and peppers in the cold frame are coming up. But they can be covered in case of a frost. The ground is still cool and damp, and the summer crops need heat. On the other hand, spring gardening is well underway.

Sugar snap and Oregon Giant Snow are the two pea varieties we grow. Both are edible, podded ones, and are a sweet treat to begin the season with. I soaked the seeds to get them swelled and ready to jump up out of the ground. A five-pound bag plants about 600 row feet, and we planted two bags.

They need a trellis to climb on. Old woven wire gets stretched along the row to wooded posts temporarily set at the ends. A few T-posts hold it up in the row. Now all the cultivation has to be done by hand, meaning it gets a little weedy later on.

The sorrel next to the peas has been cut back and sold, and now gets a good hoeing and mulching. It's a tart green that tastes like a lemon. Sorrel is much more common in Europe than here.

700 celery plants grace the next three rows, and it is nice to see something green and growing. There is about a foot apart and will be there all year. We harvest the outer stalks and let the inside ones grow back. Celery is easy to grow and handy to have in the kitchen.

Swiss chard and parsley have two rows each, and also remain all year long. The small seeds are sprinkled in shallow furrows and raked over to cover them up. It takes a while for them to sprout, hence the anxiety.

A row of various lettuce varieties is next. These will grow up tightly and then get transplanted into bed on one-foot centers. We'll have many heads in our beds, mostly Romaine and Batavia.

Three rows of carrots will produce many bushels. Danvers half-long, Imperator and Scarlet Nantes are the varieties. I can't wait to see them sprout. They look like grass at first, just tiny blades poking up. I'll feel better after hoeing them a few times. Weeds can quickly overtake them. The carrots will be out of the garden by July, and into the cave for storage.

Beets also get three early rows. Detroit Dark Red is the standard variety, and we like it just fine. For variety, we also grow Chioqqia, an Italian one with red and white concentric circles when you slice it horizontally. Both pickle well, and also store well in the cave.

Several thousand onion plants and leek plants are expected to go in today. The garlic, planted last fall, has been weeded and mulched. A row of radishes will brighten up the spring salads soon. I just wish something would sprout so I know it is there and can hoe it with care.