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Home Gardening – Well, it looks like spring has finally arrived. According to forecasts we should see temperatures reaching the 80's this week which will more than likely have everyone out in their garden preparing dirt and planting seeds. Historically, Crawford County's last chance of frost is between the 15th and the 20th of March, but this doesn't mean that we are completely out of the woods. There is always a chance of a late cold snap which could damage early planted transplants and slow the emergence of seeds that have been planted. It never hurts to set out a few plants early in the season, but you might not want to plant your entire garden for a couple of weeks.

To get your garden off to a good start you may want to consider having a soil test done which will ultimately save you money. It will let you know if lime application is needed to raise the soil pH and it will give you fertilizer recommendations for each crop. Keep in mind that not all vegetables require the same amount of nutrients to be productive. Vegetables such as potatoes, cabbage and tomatoes are heavy feeders. This means that they require large amounts of fertilizer to be productive. Crops like peas and beans are light feeders so excess fertilizers can actually reduce yields. It is unnecessary to buy separate or specialty fertilizers for each crop. A complete fertilizer such as 10-10-10, 6-12-12, or 5-10-15 will give excellent results with most crops. If you did not get a soil sample this fall and would like specific fertilizer recommendations you can call our office at 836-3121.

The most efficient way to fertilize the home garden is to apply 1/3 to 1/2 of the total fertilizer prior to planting. This will ensure nutrient availability when seeds begin to emerge or when transplants begin to cut new roots. The remainder of the fertilizer can be applied in 2 or 3 applications as the plant begins to bloom and set fruit. This method of application will reduce wasted fertilizer and help make nutrients available to the plants as needed. To prevent "burning" your vegetables with fertilizer do not broadcast fertilizer when plants are wet. When side-dressing fertilizers, make sure that the fertilizer is not placed too close to the plant. If side-dressing in furrows, make sure to stay away from the immediate root zone. This will decrease the risk of root injury due to fertilizer application. Following these rules will ensure your vegetable garden gets off to a good start this season and your garden will flourish this spring.