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### Horticulture News

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With this warm weather it won't be long until we see okra at the Harvey County Farmers Market! Okra is a tall-growing, warm-weather vegetable that is easy to grow in Kansas gardens.

Okra is sometimes called gumbo, and the edible part of the plant is the young tender pods that develop following flowering. The plant will continue to bloom and produce pods up the stalk as the season progresses.

Varieties. Clemson Spineless and Dwarf Green are standard varieties. Emerald produces a smooth, non-ribbed pod. Annie Oakley is a new hybrid variety that branches more profusely. Burgundy is a red-podded variety. Cajun Delight is an early maturing variety.

When to plant. Okra requires warm weather, and early to mid-May is a desired planting time. Soil temperatures should be 60°F, and all danger of frost should be past. Okra may be transplanted or direct seeded.

Spacing. Plant seeds an inch deep and thin to one plant every 10–12 inches in the row, with rows no closer than 3 feet apart. Okra will grow well in a wide variety of soil types and requires only minimal levels of fertilizer. It does fairly well in hot, dry seasons with periodic thorough watering. Later in the season after the plant is tall, you can cut it off about 12 inches from the ground. Use pruners or a saw because okra stalks are very tough. The plant will send up a new stem for pod production into the late summer or fall season.

Harvesting. Cut the pods from the plant when they are no longer than your finger to ensure that they will be tender, not woody. Harvesting every other day might be necessary. Okra pods can be stored in a plastic bag in a refrigerator for a week or so. Pods can easily be frozen for later use.