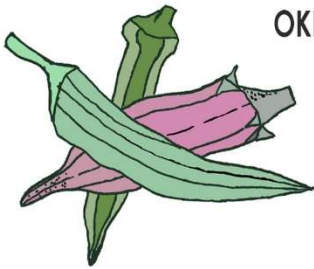


South Texas summers get quite hot to say the least! A lot of garden veggie plants either won't grow in the extreme heat of the South Texas summer or the heat makes certain vegetables (especially leafy greens) taste too bitter to enjoy. But, there are plenty of wonderful plants that will grow during the summer months. This page will show you just some of the plants that can grow during the summer in zone 9b. These are also some of the types of veggies you may see at summer farmers' markets in South Texas.



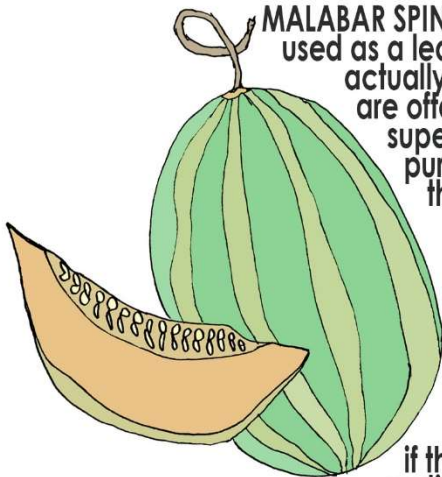
**OKRA:** One of the easiest and most prolific summer plants you can grow is okra. Okra is also known as "lady fingers" and produces edible seed pods. Even though most people think of okra as long, thin, green pods, okra can come in purple, red, and orange varieties. Some varieties of okra are short and wide, and others can grow EXTRA long! Most okra does have spiny hairs on the plant, so it is better to wear gloves while harvesting.



**BLACK-EYED PEAS:** Black eyed peas are a very common type of legume grown in the South. They are a type of "cowpea" and one of the most common varieties to grow in the South is called Purple Hull Peas. Black-eyed peas are commonly used as cover-crops as well as summer veggies.



**THAI BASIL:** Thai Basil is more heat tolerant than regular basil. It is native to Southeast Asia and has small green leaves with purple stems and purple flowers. Thai basil will have a more licorice-like taste than other basil.



**MALABAR SPINACH:** Malabar Spinach is commonly used as a leaf vegetable. It is not a true spinach. It is actually a climbing soft-stemmed vine. The leaves are often found at farmers' markets and in Asian supermarkets. Malabar spinach will have purple berries at the end of summer that can be used as a natural dye.



**MELONS:** Melons grow on sprawling vines with large leaves. They can grow on the ground or along fences/trellises, but if they are large melons, they might need hammocks if growing vertically. Everyone knows about watermelons and cantaloupes, but there are also honeydews, banana melons, apple melons, Tuscan melons, canary melons and much more to choose from!



# VEGGIE PAGES SUMMER

## USING SUMMER VEGGIES AT HOME QUICK KITCHEN TIPS

1. Okra is commonly used in gumbo or fried as a side-dish. But did you know that okra can be baked, roasted, stuffed, pickled and even eaten raw? That's right, you can even eat okra straight off the plant or chop it up finely and add it to salads for a refreshing raw crunch.

2. Thai basil is a common ingredient in red and green Thai curries. In Vietnamese food, like pho, thai basil is often served in heaps on its own plate so that individuals can use as much or as little as they want to add flavor to the hot soup broth. Thai basil can also be used to flavor drinks like herbal iced teas and lemonade.

3. Hoppin' John: Traditionally eaten on New Year's Day, this dish is a great way to use up any black-eyed peas you saved and dried from their long summer season. This dish uses black-eyed peas, rice, ham hock, and onions. This dish is often served along side cooked collard or mustard greens.

4. Watermelon Soup: Watermelon can be made into a refreshing cold soup to start your summer meals. Blended watermelon is combined with ingredients like lemon or lime juice, honey, and mint for this dish. Other variations spice up this dish with ingredients like jalapeno peppers!

5. Grilled Melon: Cut cantaloupes into wedges, peel and put on skewers for the grill. Sometimes flavored with honey or lime juice, this makes a great grilled summer side. For Watermelon, cut into triangles and leave the rind on before grilling.

**GROWING IN SUMMER AT HOME**



Black-eyed peas will sprout from seed even when it is already very hot outside. They are often used as a covercrop because of how well they grow in the summer, the nitrogen they fix in the soil, and their prolific leaves. These help cover the soil, retaining soil moisture and lowering soil temperature with their shade.

Even if you don't like the flavor of Thai Basil, it can be beneficial to grow in your summer garden because pollinators love their abundant flowers.

When watering your summer garden, you want to make sure you're watering at the base of the plants. This is especially important for melons. Water at the base of melon vines instead of over the foliage to prevent burning the leaves or encouraging powdery mildew.

You can put cardboard, straw, plates or similar barriers under melons to prevent rotting when sitting on top of wet soil, or to discourage pests like pill bugs from eating the fruit.

Okra is prone to attracting aphids, especially in cooler weather. Keep an eye out for these pests under leaves or crowding young fruits when the growing season gets closer to fall.