



Kevin Milaeger

Milaeger's

The Urge to Plant is Getting Stronger

Kevin Milaeger

We get a few warm days and the itch to plant grows in all of us. Human nature, apparently. The instinct is powerful, but we must still use common sense. We know there is bound to be at least one more cold snap. If you are unsure about when it is safe to start planting, it's a good idea to identify the place of origin for your plants---where in the world they are found as wild plants. If your plants are of tropical or subtropical origin, it's likely a good idea to wait until the weather is reliably warm---say, fifty-degree night temperatures. This is the case for the four most popular vegetables at Milaeger's. Tomato, pepper, squash, and eggplant. The first three are from Central and South America, and the fourth is from India, all warm places.



You could try to satisfy the planting urge by putting in some plants that will tolerate cool weather. Lettuce, spinach, kale, onions, and anything in the cabbage family. All could have been planted weeks ago. But if tomatoes are your thing, here is what we recommend. Most of the tomato plants at Milaeger's are offered in 3" pots. You can transplant them into larger pots, and they will enjoy a growth spurt, so when you do finally put them in the ground, you will be further ahead. A 6" pot is about right. Plant the young plants deep down in the larger pots so that new roots will emerge from the stem, and more feeder roots are always a good thing. If your eventual planting date is pushed back because of cool weather or for any



emerging roots

reason, you will probably need to stake the rapidly growing plants. Bamboo stakes are inexpensive, and you can reuse them for years. Make sure the tie that you use to secure the plant to the stake is soft so that it



doesn't cut into the plant stem. We have a



before and after

to a 7" pot. The growth spurt was phenomenal. You can do the same transplanting with other vegetables, though most grow slower than tomatoes so you could use a 5" pot---that's what we do with peppers and cukes. We finished our transplanting this week, so the planting urge is satisfied---for now.

great tie that is foam coated wire. It is flexible and you can use it several times.



foam wire ties

Now that you've got your plants transplanted into larger pots, what are you going to do with them? The best thing is to put them in a wagon, and wheel them in and out depending on the weather. If the weather is too cool, or windy, leave the plants in your garage. You could also just keep them in a sunny window of your house, but outdoors as much as possible is preferable. That will help them acclimate, or, "harden off."

Here at Milaeger's we transplanted some tomatoes about ten days ago, from a 3" pot up to a 7" pot. The growth spurt was phenomenal. You can do the same transplanting with other vegetables, though most grow slower than tomatoes so you could use a 5" pot---that's what we do with peppers and cukes. We finished our transplanting this week, so the planting urge is satisfied---for now.