Q. When can I plant my vegetable garden?
A. March 16 is the approximate last freeze date in Bell County. Cool season crops can be planted 4-6 weeks before the last freeze date. Warm season crops: such as green beans, cantaloupe, corn, cucumbers, peppers, and tomatoes can be planted after this freeze date and through out the next 4-6 weeks. Vegetables can be planted in traditional garden rows, raised beds, containers, baskets, or tucked into flowerbeds. Before you plant your seeds or transplants, you will want to remove any weeds and then work in 4-6 inches of compost. Your goal is to have 12 inches of soil that is alive with microbes. Your gardening success starts with your soil. Dr. Doug Welsh, Texas A&M horticulturist, recommends adding 2-3 pounds per 100 square feet of 15-5-10 fertilizer to new gardens. Older gardens generally require only nitrogen fertilizer such as 21-0-0. Place your garden in an area that receives at least 6 hours of sun each day. Mulch your crops with organic matter such as leaves or compost and water when necessary. Your crops will increase with regular watering.

Plan to attend the master gardener spring plant sale March 26th 7:30 AM to 1 pm. Vegetables, trees, shrubs, herbs, EarthKind roses, succulents, native grasses and perennials will be offered. A booth will be available to provide gardening and plant selection information. Bring your child or grandchild to the plant sale to visit with master gardener Darla Menking. Darla will host a Kid Camp. Children will get to work on a planting project, which they will get to take home with them. Come on out and take advantage of the Bell County master gardener plant sale.

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

In the photo: Raised bed gardening allows for easy maintenance. You can sit on a stool to plant or weed. Having the soil contained in 4x8 planting beds gives you a clean working surface and no more muddy shoes!