

# Way too early to think about planting flowers

By JoAnne Skelly

Yes, daffodils are poking out their sunny heads. Yes, the forsythia and flowering plums are blooming. Yes, there are some beautiful warm days.

However, it's still too early for planting tomatoes or peppers, cucumbers, squash, beans and many others.

It never fails, when the first lovely spring days arrive, people new to the area want to know if they can plant their tomatoes. Hold your horses! Or, maybe I should say, "Hold your plants."

The last average frost date for much of the area is May 15. Note the operative word here – average. Last year we had a killer freeze after that date. Most gardeners lost their fruit buds, lilac flowers and iris buds. In Washoe Valley where I live, I wait until June 1 to plant because I know we are colder than most areas. Many of the other outer valleys freeze more readily and stay colder longer than in town.

Here's some good advice to gardening newbies – become a weather watcher. Know the weather and the microclimates around your house and neighborhood. Track the last and first frost dates, not only for your area, but for your home. However, even that might not do you any good in avoiding frosts. After all, we all had a late freeze last year after June 1, even in town.

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