

News Column  
by Greg McClure, KSU-Riley County Extension Agriculture Agent  
110 Courthouse Plaza  
Manhattan, KS 66502

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Phone: 785/537-6350  
Fax: 785/537-6353

## SOYBEAN PLANTING DATE

As I get older, the number of times I have been wrong continues to climb. That makes perfect sense if you understand that I'm not counting the number of times I am wrong each day – just the total number. Obviously that number will continue to rise, no matter how cautious I am in expressing my views.

In my younger days I often knew I was right, and I was certainly willing to tell you why. Now that I've been humbled a few times, I try to take a more cautious approach.

Today is one of those days when I will try to be cautious because further research could prove me to be wrong. Nevertheless, I'm going to go on record stating that I still like mid-May as my starting date for planting soybeans. I'm not convinced we should be planting soybeans in April in Riley County, Kansas.

If you read any of the farm magazines, you have probably seen plenty of articles the past couple of years promoting early soybean planting – planting soybeans before planting corn. Experts in other states say earlier planted beans yield more. While I am skeptical, I won't argue their point because I haven't seen their numbers.

I haven't seen yield numbers for early planted soybeans in Kansas either.

As best I can tell, there isn't a whole lot of data out there yet; just a lot of talk. We'll have a few local producers give it a shot this year, having already planted a few acres of beans before they started planting corn, and I'll be watching to see how that works out.

What we know, and what you all know, is that weather patterns dictate soybean yields. If it rains while beans are at their peak of flowering, yields will be good. For late-May planted soybeans, a mid-August rain is often ideal.

There is obviously no guarantee that any one planting date will be the best year after year. In fact, we have seen mid to late-June planted soybean out-yield May planted beans in recent years. Normally we expect about a half bushel per day yield decline for every day beans are planted after June 10,...but you never know.

The reason we usually plant corn first in the spring is because corn requires a soil temperature of just 50 degrees Fahrenheit to germinate, whereas we normally recommend waiting to plant soybeans until the soil temperature is at least 55 to 60 degrees.

We are now being told that soybeans can emerge when the soil is just 50 degrees, but it might take two to three weeks. Promoters of early soybean planting say soybeans fare better lying in the soil for three weeks than does corn. Thus, they are suggesting planting soybeans until it is warm enough to plant beans.

I'm not convinced.

Until I see some research data from Kansas convincing me otherwise, I will continue to recommend planting soybeans after the soil temperature at a two-inch depth has reach 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

If soil conditions are right, maybe starting planting soybeans when the soil temperature reaches 55 degrees, but most of the time just wait for 60 degrees. Then, if you are planting grain sorghum too, wait for the soil temperature to reach 65-70 degrees before you put that seed in the ground.

If your spouse won't loan you their meat thermometer to check the soil temp, you can

about guess that (in this part of the state) the soil temp for corn won't be right until about April 15, maybe May 10-15 for soybeans, and closer to May 20 or later for grain sorghum.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to [gmclure@ksu.edu](mailto:gmclure@ksu.edu).

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