

FALL PLANTING GUIDE FOR VEGETABLES

By Linda Caraway, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Many popular vegetables such as lettuce, broccoli, carrots and cabbage can be grown in the fall garden. These cool season vegetables are hardy to light frost and prefer the cooler days of early fall as well as early spring. The flavor of some cool season vegetables such as kale improves when the plant is exposed to frost.

As with any garden, the first steps in fall planting are to choose an appropriate site and prepare the soil. Your garden site should receive a minimum of 6 hours of full sun each day; eight to ten hours is ideal. Avoid low spots and very windy locations, as they can breed disease problems and increase a plant's moisture stress. It is best to locate gardens away from buildings and other construction when possible.

Good drainage is important for your garden site. Poor drainage is generally due to compacted soil. Deep cultivation may be necessary to loosen soil. Incorporating organic matter into the soil also improves drainage, such as ½" pine bark nuggets or compost for heavy clay. Another alternative is to plant in raised beds.

A soil test, available through your County Extension Office, is a valuable tool for determining what types of amendments your soil may need. All soils benefit from the addition of organic matter such as compost. Work compost into the soil thoroughly before planting.

Placing mulch around plants helps retain moisture and control weeds. Many types of material may be used for mulch, including bark chips, compost, grass clippings (dried for 2 or 3 days), pine needles, or straw. Hay is not recommended, as the seedheads can lead to major weed problems. A two to three inch mulch layer is ideal in active growing conditions.

The chart below lists some popular varieties of cool season vegetables along with suggested planting dates for our area and other information on planting. Vegetables may be planted as early as the first date. Vegetables planted before the last date should be mature and ready to harvest before our area's average first frost date of October 10. Please note, however, that this is an *average* date and may vary from season to season.

After planting vegetable seeds, be sure to keep beds moist. Seeds must remain moist in order to germinate. After plants are established, water when the top two inches of soil in the bed begin to feel dry to the touch. Both over watering and under watering can damage plants.

When space is limited, gardeners may need to use the same beds for both their warm and cool season plantings. To allow the warm season vegetables more time to mature, many fall plants can be started in pots and transplanted after the warm season vegetables are harvested. Seeds for transplants should be germinated in an artificial growing media or potting soil. Do not use garden soil for starting seeds!

Before moving young transplants to the garden they must be hardened off, so they can slowly acclimate to outdoor conditions. This can be done by placing plants in their pots out of doors daily for a few hours, gradually increasing the time each day until the plants have adapted to garden conditions. Remember that the best time to transplant is on an overcast day or in the early evening.

FALL PLANTING CHART

<u>Vegetable</u>	<u>Variety</u>	<u>Planting Dates</u>	<u>Days to Germination</u>	<u>Plant Spacing</u>	<u>Planting Depth</u>
Beets	Detroit Red	7/22-8/6	direct seed	3-4 inches	¼ inch
Broccoli	De Cicco	7/22-8/8	21 days	15 inches	1/4 inch
Cabbage	Savoy Ace	7/1-7/13	21 days	15 inches	1/4 - 1/2 inches
Carrots	Scarlet Nantes	7/13-7/31	direct seed	2-3 inches	1/4 inch
Cauliflower	Snow Crown	8/1-8/17	21 days	12-15 inches	1/4-1/2 inches
Chard	Golden/Rhubarb	8/1-8/15	direct seed	12-18 inches	1/2 inch
Kale	Red Russian	8/1-8/18	direct seed	15-18 inches	1/2 inch
Lettuce	Buttercrunch	8/1-8/17	14 days	10 inches	1/4 -1/2 inches
Lettuce	Emerald Oak	8/1-8/12	14 days	6-8 inches	1/4-1/2 inches
Lettuce	Red Oak Leaf	8/1-8/12	14 days	6-8 inches	1/4-1/2 inches
Lettuce	Romaine	7/20-7/28	14 days	10 inches	1/4-1/2 inches
Peas	Cascadia	7/26-8/2	direct seed	4-6 inches	1/2-3/4 inches

Resources

Denckla, Tanya L.K. The Gardener's A-Z Guide to Growing Organic Food, Storey Publishing, 2003.

Hamilton, George, "Home Vegetable Gardening" power point presentation, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension.

Evan, Erv The North Carolina Master Gardener Training Manual, 5th edition, North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension, 1998