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August 12, 2012

## Getting the Fall Garden Started

When planting transplants for a fall garden planting would occur in early September but because transplants are not available in the fall, garden planting must be done by seed. Seeds for a fall garden are planted as early as August 1. Timing depends on the days needed to produce mature harvest.

In southeast Missouri there are many vegetables that can be planted in the fall. Given that the year has been so dry and many gardens did not do well, think about trying a fall garden this year. Often, a fall garden is the easiest seasonal garden due to lower disease and insect pressure. As an added bonus the flavors that come from a fall garden are often better, perhaps due to cooler weather.

Plants that should be planted first include those that take the longest amount of time to mature. Plants that take up to 90 days from planting to harvest include broccoli, carrots, potato and onion. Next in line would be plants that take up to 70 days to harvest: cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, cabbage, collards, beets and Swiss chard. Kale, mustard, peas and onion sets take from 50 to 60 days to harvest. Radish and spinach take only 30 days. These could be planted early and planted again in 30 days to get a second harvest.

Other than days to mature, consider plants that are cold tolerant. Spinach for example matures quickly, in 30 days, but also is very cold tolerant. Spinach that was planted during fall of 2011 survived the mild winter and produced a harvest through spring. These types of plants could be placed together while the remaining space in your garden could be prepared for spring planting. Plants that have the highest cold tolerance include broccoli, spinach, onions, kale, mustard greens, radish, turnip and collards. These plants will tolerate a hard frost and come back. Plants that can tolerate one light frost are potato, parsnip, lettuce, endive, chard, cauliflower, carrot, beet and Chinese cabbage.

Remember that when planting seed plant no deeper than 3-4 times the seeds width. Tiny seeds like spinach or lettuce are usually placed on the surface and then lightly covered with soil. The soil surface should be loose and finely raked to the depth the seed will be planted.

After planting it is crucial that seeds and seedlings receive adequate amount of water. During the month of August, while it is hot and likely dry, make sure that irrigation is available. Seeds should remain damp until they germinate. Once seedlings, small plants that have broken through the soil surface, are up make sure they receive one inch of water per week. Generally in September there is enough rain to maintain the plants in the garden. Hopefully that will be the norm this fall. If not, irrigation should continue until Mother Nature takes over.

Seeds are relatively cheap compared to transplants so even if the summer weather has discouraged you, try a fall garden. Watching plants grow will lift your spirits and the delicious fall harvest will boost your health.

For more information on garden planting see the Vegetable Planting Calendar by Lewis Jett, G6201 University of Missouri Extension - <http://extension.missouri.edu/explorepdf/agguides/hort/g06201.pdf>

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