

## Fall Gardening Season Starts Now:



**Mid-summer is the perfect time to plant cool season vegetables for a fall harvest.**

It's hot it's humid, and the height of summer in Missouri; not exactly the time of year most gardeners want to think about working out in their vegetable gardens, much less planting transplants and new vegetable seeds that will take plenty of time, water, and care. Despite the unpleasant working conditions of typical hot summer weather, the fall gardening season is just around the corner. In fact the preparation for a productive fall vegetable garden starts now.

When I had my own vegetable garden years ago, my main emphasis was growing warm season vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, and zucchini. Out of habit, if I planted cool season crops such as broccoli or cabbage, it was always in the spring. But many cool season crops produce sweeter, more flavorful growth if planted in mid-summer and allowed to mature during the warm days and cool nights of autumn.

Pre-planning is the most important step when choosing to plant vegetables in the fall. Many cool season vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, and cabbage, should be started as transplants 4-6 weeks before they are planted outdoors. It is recommended to plant broccoli starts and other transplanted crops such as cabbage outdoors the around August 15th for fall production.

Since the fall season is shorter with the chance of frost in October, it is important to pick varieties of cool season crops which are “early maturing,” and take less time to mature than typical spring planted varieties. It may not be easy to locate specific early maturing cool season vegetable seeds in July at local stores in Rolla. Remember next year to include your fall gardening seeds in your spring vegetable seed purchase.

Although around August 20<sup>th</sup> is the time of year to plant spinach and leaf lettuce, these seeds are sensitive to the hot temperatures of summer and often will not germinate. To stimulate germination for temperature sensitive crops Extension recommends starting these seed indoors in the coolness of air conditioning by spouting them in a damp paper towel and carefully transplanting outdoors as soon as they sprout to prevent damage. If this is not possible, double the depth seeds are planted and making sure the soil surrounding the seeds is cooled with a shading material will help stimulate germination.

To determine the amount of time needed for proper plant growth in the fall it is important to follow a simple equation, taking into consideration the growth period, slowing growth with cool temperatures, and the possible need to harvest prior to frost depending on the crop. For example I have a packet of “Detroit Dark Red Beets” which recommends 10-12 days for germination + 58 days from germination to harvest. I would add an additional 14 days to make up for slower growth in fall. If I had a frost sensitive crop such as beans then I would add an additional 14 days, but because beets can take a light frost (30-32 degrees F.) I will not add this to the equation. The total days to harvest would therefore come out to be 84 days. Our first fall frost in Central Missouri is typically around October 10<sup>th</sup>(<sup>1</sup>) and since beets can survive light frost of 30-32 degrees F., with a light weight row cover such Agribon fabric, this harvest date can be extended into late October.

An all-purpose 10-10-10 fertilizer should be incorporated at the time of planting for best results. Make sure to water vegetable seeds well and often in the hot weather of late summer.

To find out more information on fall vegetable gardening, the University of Missouri Extension will be offering a short “Fall Gardening” class for beginner gardeners on August 15<sup>th</sup>. Please contact the Phelps County Extension office at 573-458-6260 to reserve a seat in the class.<sup>23456</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://agebb.missouri.edu/weather/frost2.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Trinklein, David. “Fall gardening Feeds the Body and Spirit.” 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Lerner, Rosie, B. “The Fall Vegetable Garden.” Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service. 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Jett, Lewis W. “Vegetable Planting Calendar.” MU-Extension guide, G6201. 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Lott, David. & Dale Lindgren. “Fall Vegetable Gardening.” University of Nebraska Extension guide, G1343. 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Relf, Diane. “Fall Vegetable Gardening.” Virginia Cooperative Extension publication 426-334. 2009.