

Growing Winter Vegetables

Benefits of Growing Your Own

As sustainability and self-sufficiency gain popularity, so does home gardening. Personal satisfaction, access to varieties, and economics are also among the many reasons for growing your own vegetables.

What to Plant

West of the Cascades, there are many vegetables that can be planted in summer to harvest in fall or winter and some that can be left in the ground to overwinter for an early spring crop.

• **Cole Crops**

- . Broccoli
- . Brussels Sprouts
- . Cabbage
- . Cauliflower

• **Root Vegetables**

- . Beets
- . Carrots
- . Kohlrabi
- . Radish
- . Rutabaga
- . Turnip

• **Greens**

- . Collard
- . Kale
- . Lettuce
- . Spinach
- . Swiss Chard

• **Legumes**

- . Peas
- . Fava Beans

• **Overwintering Vegetables**

- . Cauliflower
- . Legumes

When to Plant

Plant most vegetables in July for fall, winter, and spring harvests. Exceptions to this are alliums: plant onions in July, garlic and shallots in October for harvesting the following summer.

It is important to know the first frost date for your area. Consult instructions on the seed packets to determine the best time to plant seeds.

How to Plant

Vegetables can be directly sown from seed, transplanted from your own starts, or purchased at a garden center. Use only plants that are specifically designated for fall planting.

Choose a site that gets at least eight hours of direct sunlight each day. Take advantage of structures such as south-facing walls or fences that reflect and hold heat longer. Raised beds, made with wood structures or made simply by mounding soil, heat up earlier in the spring and hold heat longer. Be sure that your site is protected from strong winds and that the soil has good drainage.

Next, prepare your soil by removing any rocks and weeds, and amend the soil as needed. Clay soil can be improved by adding organic matter. Apply a low-nitrogen fertilizer to focus growth on roots and fruit, not on leaves. Ensure your beds have at least 15 to 18 inches of loose soil to allow adequate room for root growth and water distribution. If your dry soil is too hard to dig, try soaking it in advance.

To plant seeds, first define your rows. Lay a simple 3-foot stake lengthwise in your bed and use it to “carve” a trough for your seeds. Make your trough twice as deep as the seed

is wide, and then lay your seeds along the bottom of the trough. If you mark off your stake in inches, you can use it as a guide for spacing your seeds. Once your seeds are in place, use the stake again to gently move the soil back in place. Repeat for the desired number of rows.

To plant transplants, start by soaking your new plants in a bucket or other container while you prepare your rows. This will ensure that the roots are well hydrated before being put into the ground. Using stakes and twine, mark your rows, and then dig holes, allowing the recommended spacing between each plant. Remove the plant container and examine the roots. If the roots are densely twined in a circle around the outside of the potting soil, cut through or break apart the root ball and loosen soil around roots before planting.

Caring for Your New Plants

It is likely that your new garden will be planted at the warmest time of the year. While warm soil is excellent for germination and root growth, water is also required. Be sure to keep your plants adequately moist until fall rains return regularly.

Treat slugs early to reduce populations when fall rains begin. Sharply edged items such as gravel and egg shells deter slugs. Recess a small container such as an empty tuna can so that only approximately ½ inch extends above ground, and place a small amount of beer inside. The yeasty scent of beer will lure slugs to death by drowning.

As cold weather ensues, mulch your plants with leaves or grass clippings. Cloches, walls-o-water, and cold frames also make good season extenders. Do not use a high nitrogen fertilizer on crops in fall as it can stimulate late leaf growth, susceptible to frost damage.

Harvesting Your Fall and Winter Garden

Root vegetables such as turnips and beets are sweeter after a frost, which causes the plant to concentrate its sugars. Other crops such carrots can be left in the ground and harvested throughout the winter. Lettuce and other salad greens will slow their growth during cold weather but can be hardy to 20° F.

OSU Extension Service Resources

Visit your OSU Extension Service office at 200 Warner-Milne Road, Oregon City, for these publications, or get them online at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog>

Fall and Winter Vegetable Gardening in the Pacific Northwest (PNW 548)

Constructing Coldframes and Hotbeds (FS 246-E)

Master Gardener™ Advice

- Call Home Horticulture Helpline: 503-655-8631 (Clackamas County), 503-821-1150 (Washington County), or 503-445-4608 (Multnomah County).
- For more 10-Minute University™ handouts and class schedule, visit www.cmastergardeners.org or www.metromastergardeners.org.
- Look for Master Gardeners at area Farmers' Markets.

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