

Fall and winter gardening

If you live west of the Cascades, there's a good chance you can garden almost year-round with a little extra effort. Many cool-season crops produce well in the fall and hold through the winter if protected. Good crops for fall and winter gardens include salad greens, cabbage, broccoli, kale, Brussels sprouts, carrots, leeks, beets, turnips, scallions, parsley, cilantro, spinach, and parsnips. You can plant these vegetables in mid- to late summer after you harvest spring crops and space is available.

The first key to a successful fall and winter garden is location. Good drainage is essential, and raised beds are best. If your soil doesn't drain well, amend it with organic matter such as compost.

Don't plant in a spot that is prone to early frost (for example, at the bottom of a hill) or exposed to the wind. Look for an area that gets maximum sun during winter. A south-facing slope is ideal.

Make sure your winter garden is easily accessible. It's no fun to slog through mud and cold rain to harvest your crops.

Choose varieties that are suited to fall and winter harvest. Some varieties are designated specifically for fall planting, while others perform well only in the spring. Consult seed catalogs to find the best varieties.

It can be tricky to know when to plant a fall garden. The crops need to have time to mature before cold weather and short days curtail growth, but if you plant too early the young plants might wilt in the heat or be too mature to hold well into the winter.

To determine when to plant a particular vegetable in your area, you need to know the average date of the first killing frost and the number of days to maturity for the variety. The formula below will help you determine when to plant:

- Number of days from seeding or transplanting outdoors to harvest
- + Number of days from seed to transplant (if you grow your own transplants)
- + Fall factor (about 2 weeks to account for the fact that plants grow more slowly in the cool, short days of autumn)
- = Number of days to count back from first frost date

Before planting, rework the soil by tilling or spading to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. Then apply ½ cup of 5-10-10 fertilizer for each 100 square feet of row space. Add organic matter if needed to improve drainage.

To prevent disease problems, don't plant crops where a related vegetable was growing. For example, put broccoli in a spot vacated by peas, not by cabbage.

When thinning, leave extra space between plants that will stay in the garden over the winter. Closely spaced plants are more susceptible to rots and slug damage in cool, wet weather than are those with adequate ventilation.

Control slugs as soon as fall rains start. By reducing the population in early fall before the breeding season, you'll have less trouble during the winter.

Fall also is the time to protect your plants from the weather. Cold frames, cloches, Walls-o-Water, and other protective devices keep the environment inside slightly warmer than the surrounding air. They also protect plants from frost and, just as important, cold rain.

For more information

Constructing Coldframes and Hotbeds (FS 246)
How to Build Your Own Raised Bed Cloche (EC 1627)
Available in the OSU Extension catalog:
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog>

Extend the growing season by using a row cover or other device to protect plants from harsh weather.



© 2011 Oregon State University
Gail Langellotto, Statewide Coordinator, OSU Extension Service Master Gardener Program.

Prepared by the following current and former OSU Extension staff: Mark Anderson-Wilk, Michael Bauer, Amy Dreves, Barbara Fick, Tom Gentle, Gail Glick, Gail Gredler, Gail Langellotto, Kerry Locke, Lynn Long, Fred Lundin, Jerry Maul, Jan McNeilan, Ray McNeilan, Steve Morgan, Pat Patterson, Ross Penhallegon, Janice Reynolds, Bill Rogers, Bob Rost, Carol Savonen, George Tiger, Ann Marie VanDerZanden, Tom Weeks, Teresa Welch. Photos by Extension and Experiment Station Communications, © Oregon State University, iStockphoto, and stock.xchng.

This publication was produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties.

Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials without discrimination based on age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran's status. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Trade-name products are mentioned as illustrations only. This does not mean that the Oregon State University Extension Service either endorses these products and services or intends to discriminate against products and services not mentioned.

Use pesticides safely!

- Wear protective clothing and safety devices as recommended on the label. Bathe or shower after each use.
- Read the pesticide label—even if you've used the pesticide before. Follow closely the instructions on the label (and any other directions you have).
- Be cautious when you apply pesticides. Know your legal responsibility as a pesticide applicator. You may be liable for injury or damage resulting from pesticide use.

EM 9027. Replaces GROW. Revised April 2011.