



We have had several Master Gardeners move to the Ft. Worth area in the last few years from different areas of the country and they all seem to say the same thing, TEXAS is different! How do you garden here, it's either cold or hot and nothing in between. Where is the Spring, it goes from Winter to summer and not much in between! By the time my vegetables start to produce it gets so hot that I don't even want to go outside and besides that they are burning up! When is the best time to grow Vegetables?

Believe it or not, fall vegetable gardening starts in July! Cold-sensitive vegetable crops (e.g. pepper, squash and tomato) must be given time to mature and fruit before the first frost.

“Better late than never” may be an appropriate cliché for some garden tasks but not for fall gardening. You must plant in midsummer to ensure fresh homegrown vegetables for your Thanksgiving feast. Fall vegetable gardening is very productive and has different and distinct advantages over spring vegetable gardening:

- Vegetable crops are maturing as the days are getting shorter and cooler; the quality of crops, such as broccoli, cauliflower and lettuce is much higher (less chance of bitter taste developing).
- Rainfall is generally more frequent in the fall; thus watering chores are reduced.
- Insect pest populations are on the decline, not increasing as in spring. (e.g. Squash Vine Borers are rarely a problem in the fall as compared to the spring).

The weather is cooling off and much more conducive to getting out in the garden.

To ensure a good crop of warm-season vegetables before the first frost, grow from transplants, not seed. You can often find transplants at local nurseries in 4 or 6 inch pots, if you can find larger transplants buy them as it's often worth the extra cost to shorten the time until harvest.

Quick establishment of transplants in the garden is critical to success. Even with the hot, dry weather of North Central Texas, these transplants will survive as long as you provide adequate watering to each and every transplant. It will take about 2 weeks for a transplant to establish a large enough root system to begin fast growth of the stems and leaves. During these two weeks you will need to provide light watering daily to the transplants along with a good layer of a organic mulch to keep that moisture in and around the plants.

Drip irrigation is the most efficient method of watering, much more directed and less evaporation. If you don't have access to any type of drip, then create small basins around each plant for these first few weeks. These basins make it easier to apply a pint or so of water daily to each

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plant, be sure and don't drown these babies or the root system could possibly rot instead of grow.

After the plants are established well, and starting to produce then the application of the fertilizer of your choice would help to make these plants kick into gear and start producing the loads of vegetables your so hungry for all fall.

Remember, the most important reason to grow a garden in the fall is often a selfish one – it feels good to us. Working in the garden is much more pleasant in the fall. The heat of the summer is in the past, the garden is much more vibrant and beautiful. As that guru of gardening Dr. Doug Welsh once said, “fall into gardening” once again or for the very first time!!



Fall Vegetable Crops

***Broccoli, Lettuce and
Cauliflower!***