

September 2022 Gardener's Corner

By Cate White, San Joaquin County Master Gardener

When you think of vegetable gardens, succulent summer fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes, squashes, peppers, cucumbers and melons most likely spring to mind. In our area, though, winter growing vegetables far outnumber summer ones. Early September is the perfect time to set out young seedlings (and sometime seeds) of many delicious veggies. All the vegetables listed below enjoy cool fall and winter temperatures and will tolerate frost.



Lettuce Seedling

To me, among the best and easiest is leaf lettuce. There are lots of varieties including butterhead, romaine, oak leaf, and ruby red. About 45 days after planting, you should be picking beautiful full heads. Other leafy vegetables such as regular heading and Chinese or Napa cabbage varieties thrive in fall and winter. All varieties of kale can be planted now and will overwinter well through early spring. I enjoy Tuscan kale, but there are many others including Russian and curly leaf. Swiss Chard is another cool season leafy green. There are two main varieties, Bright Lights, that has red or yellow stems, or the old fashioned white stemmed variety. Other vegetables to plant now as seedlings include broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, collards, and Bok Choy.



Chard, Kale and Mustard Leaves

Many vegetables can also be planted from seed in October. The selection is almost endless: choose from beets, carrots, turnips, radishes, mustard greens, parsnips, fava beans and peas. Beets and carrots come in many varieties and colors. Be patient when planting carrots since they can take upwards of two weeks to sprout. An added bonus of beets is that the greens are just as good to eat as the roots. Radishes grow quickly and should be ready for harvest in about 30 days. Peas can be planted anytime from October through March. Most of these vegetables are available in many delicious varieties. You could even plant two or more varieties of one sort that mature at different times to extend your harvest.



Carrots

Vegetables in the onion family, such as leeks, green onions, bulb onions, shallots and garlic all grow well in the winter months. Garlic, bulb onions and shallots can be planted from cloves (in the case of garlic), or sets (small bulbs) from late September through November. Leeks and green or bunching onions can be planted now as seedlings.

Two annual herbs that grow well in winter that should be planted as seedlings are parsley and cilantro. Technically, parsley is classified as a biennial, meaning that it grows through two seasons, setting seed and dying in its second year. It comes in curly leaf and Italian or flat leaf varieties. Of course, many herbs are perennial in our climate, growing year-round, including thyme, oregano, marjoram and sage and rosemary.

The primary pests in winter months are slugs and snails, so be sure to put out bait. If you have pets, avoid baits containing metaldehyde. Other pests include aphids, which can be controlled with insecticidal soaps or neem oil, and cabbage looper caterpillars, best controlled with B.t., or bacillus thuringiensis.

So, this Fall, try your hand at growing a cool season vegetable or two. Some of them, including lettuce, Swiss chard, kale and parsley can even be quite ornamental. And they're tasty and healthy for you besides!

September Garden Checklist

- Continue monitoring and adjusting your irrigation system according to weather conditions.
- Keep controlling for mosquitoes, ants and yellow jackets. Use Bacillus Thuringiensis Israelensis to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in ponds, fountains or birdbaths. Use baits for ants and yellow jackets.
- Watch for aphids, white flies, caterpillars and spider mites, and control using methods such as spraying with water, insecticidal soap or neem oil. Bt is effective on caterpillars including Tomato worms.
- Prune evergreens and summer flowering shrubs. Remove any fruit mummies (shrunken dried out fruit) from fruit trees.
- Start planting flowering winter annuals, cool season vegetables, perennials, trees and foundation shrubs beginning in mid-September. Divide and replant overgrown perennials such as daylilies, coreopsis and yarrow.
- Continue to harvest and enjoy your summer vegetables, removing plants that have stopped producing or have become sickly.