

Dreaming of a Fall Veggie Garden

If you're dreaming about that fall veggie garden, don't linger much longer. Now is the time to get those vegetables planted and going. There are always several considerations when planning your fall planting: soil preparation and temperature, space for the garden as a whole and for each crop, irrigation needs, time to maturity, whether to plant seeds or seedlings – this is just to name a few.

Generally, the time to plant is dictated by two things: the length of time it takes to produce the crop and the frost tolerance of the plant. The tougher plants that may handle several frosts are called "semi-hardy". When selecting these, consider early maturing and disease resistant varieties. Some semi-hardy examples are beets, carrots, cabbage, leaf lettuce and green peas. Alternatively, "tender" vegetables require a harvest time prior to any frost. Again, early maturing and disease resistant varieties are good choices for tender plants. Some tender vegetable options are cucumber, summer and winter squash, and pumpkin. We can't control frost dates but we can try to harvest early whenever possible and take preventative measures against disease.

Some plants fare better when planted as seedlings versus sown as seeds directly in the soil. Consider this: a seed requires oxygen, an appropriate soil temperature, adequate water to germinate, and planted no deeper than three times the diameter of the seed. So, this can prove to be a challenging venture in Oklahoma with our excessive August (and sometimes September) surface soil temperatures and dryness. Mulch, shade cloth, and drip irrigation are three mitigating techniques to help ensure your crop successfully germinates and establishes well before fall rains provide needed relief.

Weeds also love great soil and sun, and will compete with your plants for resources, so stay after those while they're small. Insects must also be identified and controlled as they can do quick and serious damage, often in just a few days' time. It is almost September and the planting season is not getting younger. Starting your garden now may prove to be the best decision you've made all year - to provide your family with delicious home-grown vegetables well into fall. And, if you use a cold frame to extend the growing season, the frost on the pumpkins may not bother your crop at all.

For more information on what to plant and when, OSU has assembled an informative fact sheet ([HLA-6009: Fall Gardening](#)) which includes extremely useful planting illustrations and a chart documenting what, when and how to plant various crops for a fall harvest. It's a great resource to print and attach to your fridge. Another very helpful fact sheet ([EPP-7313: Home Vegetable Garden Insect Pest Control](#)) outlines effective ways to identify and control these unwanted dinner guests.