

Fall Gardening In July

For those of us who love the taste of fresh fruits and vegetables, gardening is a year-round activity. The fall gardening season, which begins around July 15th, can actually produce some of the tastiest garden vegetables in Northeast Oklahoma, as we typically have warm sunny days followed by cool nights. Under these conditions, plant metabolism slows down, which helps them produce high quality and tasty vegetables.

Vegetables grown in fall gardens can be divided into two categories: tender vegetables which need to be harvested before the frost and semi-hardy vegetables that can continue to grow and be harvested through several frosts.

Examples of tender vegetables would be beans (bush, pole, lima), cilantro, corn, cucumber, eggplant, pepper, pumpkin, squash, and tomatoes. Semi-hardy vegetables would include beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, potatoes, kale, lettuce, peas, radish, spinach, and swiss chard.

The brutally hot temperatures we often have in July and August demand we pay special attention to any vegetables we intend to direct seed in our fall gardens. As a rule, seeds should be planted no deeper than three times the diameter of the seed. With small seeds such as carrots, this would mean planting no more than 1/4" deep. At these depths, hot soil temperatures will discourage germination. Supplemental watering or perhaps shade cloths will be needed to reduce soil temperatures so germination can occur.

The good news is many of our fall vegetables can be started from seed indoors, which helps us avoid having to deal with the soil temperature issue. Plants that perform well as transplants include cucumbers, squash, peppers, pumpkins, and tomatoes. Before moving transplants into the garden they should be conditioned or toughened by reducing watering and exposing them to full sunlight in limited amounts.

If space allows, potatoes are also a wonderful fall garden crop. Seed potatoes need to go in the ground the first two weeks of August in order to complete growing before the first freeze.

The first of September is the time to plant garlic, leeks, and onions, as they will continue to grow through the winter for a harvest in late spring the following year.

The OSU Extension Office has several fact sheets which not only provide you with the planting dates for fall crops but also contain recommended varieties of vegetables that can be grown successfully here in Oklahoma. Check out [HLA-6009](#).

For more information, just give us a call, drop by our office, or check our website. We are here to help.