



Planting a Fall Vegetable Garden

By UC Master Gardener, Cristina K.

Fall is a perfect time to plant some cool season vegetables in your school garden. We are very fortunate to be able to grow food almost year-round here in California, with a good selection of vegetables that prefer the cooler, rainy season to grow. Most vegetables planted in the fall will be ready for harvesting in late winter or early spring, so it is a wonderful time to tend to the garden and grow vegetables during the school year.

In Contra Costa county, we have two distinct climates: the coastal regions and the interior regions, and each region differs in the types of vegetables that can be planted in the fall, due to the influence of the coastal moisture or the drier, cooler interior regions.

First, plan out your garden beds, deciding on which plants are best suited for your region and where in the bed they will be planted. You can even draw a simple map of your garden plan, making sure you leave the appropriate amount of space that each plant needs to grow. Plant spacing information is always available on the back of seed packets.

Once your garden beds are planned out, prepare your garden bed for fall planting as per the guidelines provided in this newsletter, including cleaning out and removing old vegetable plants and debris, adding a good amount of compost to the bed, and thoroughly irrigating. Most of the plants listed here can be planted directly from seed into the soil, except for artichokes and asparagus, which are perennial plants that are planted as bare root or crowns. Some plants are more successful if they are started by planting seeds into a starting mix in seedling trays and then the 2-3-inch seedlings are transplanted into the garden later in the fall. These include cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli. These plants should be started in seedling trays as early as August or early September, to be transplanted in late September through October.

Here is a quick list of the vegetables that can be planted each month for each climate region, followed by a link to the detailed regional planting guide:

Coastal Regions (includes Richmond, Kensington, Martinez...)

September: Bok Choy, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrots, Lettuces, Parsnip, Radish, Spinach, Swiss Chard

October: Bok Choy, Broccoli Raab, Cabbage, Garlic, Onions, Parsley, Peas, Radish, Spinach, Swiss Chard

November: Cabbage, Garlic, Onions, Parsley, Peas, Radish, Spinach

December: Artichoke, Asparagus, Garlic, Leeks, Onions, Parsley, Peas, Radish and Spinach.

Coastal Planting Guide <https://ucanr.edu/sites/ccmg/files/131285.pdf>

Interior Regions (includes Concord, Walnut Creek, Brentwood, Danville...)

September: Beets, Bok Choy, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuces, Parsnip, Radish, Spinach, Swiss Chard, Turnips

October: Bok Choy, Broccoli Raab, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Garlic, Kohlrabi, Lettuces, Parsley, Radish, Spinach, Swiss Chard, Turnips

November: Bok Choy, Cabbage, Garlic, Onions, Parsley, Radish, Turnips

December: Artichoke, Asparagus, Garlic, Onions, Parsley, Radish, Turnips

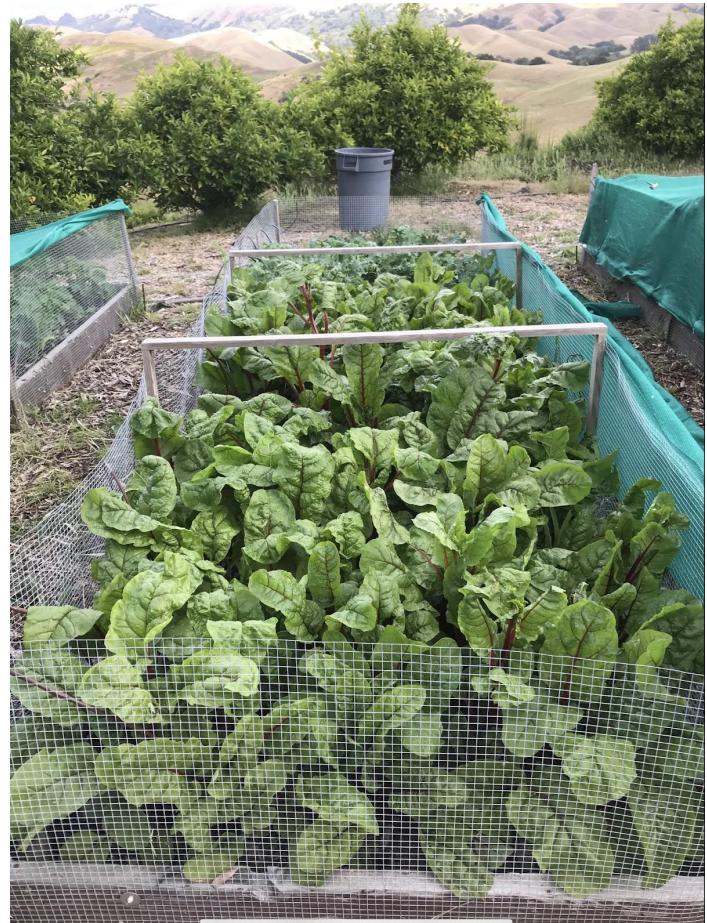
Interior Planting Guide <https://ucanr.edu/sites/ccmg/files/131284.pdf>

Once your garden beds are planted, make sure to irrigate as needed depending on rainfall and moisture in the soil. A moisture reader is a good tool to have to make sure the garden beds have sufficient water throughout the growing season. Add a good layer of compost to the garden every month. Regularly check the garden for pests and other problems, removing decaying leaves and other debris from around the plants to ensure there is good air circulation throughout the garden. This will help prevent bacterial diseases that can occur in the cool, rainy season.

Finally, record all your plans and activities throughout the season so that you can learn what worked and what didn't in your garden and to help you plan for next year. Happy Fall planting!!!



Lettuces growing in fall garden



Swiss Chard and kale growing in fall garden

Photo Credit, Cristina K.