



FALL IS FOR PLANTING ... *lettuce, spinach, arugula, mache, chard, Broccoli raab, kale, peas, radishes, carrots, beets, turnips, cilantro, Asian greens, leeks, calendulas, violas, and more!*

“Fall is for Planting” banners begin to sprout up in nursery sales yards when gardens are still wearing their summer colors. The intent is to encourage shoppers to buy and plant trees and shrubs, but vegetable and flower growers should take action as well. Start seeds in late summer to take advantage of the balmy days, cool nights, and warm soils of fall. To read about the Top Ten Fall Varieties to grow from seed, visit www.ezfromseed.org.

Think Ahead

Imagine weeks, or even months of harvesting tender baby greens, sweet carrots, salad turnips, and edible-podded peas. Even in northern climates it is possible to grow fresh vegetables through late fall. Begin by checking seed packets for “days to maturity.” Add 14 days to the number on the packet and subtract the sum from your average first frost date. This is your seed starting date. In the case of a spinach variety that matures in 40 days, for example, plan to sow seed 54 days (about 8 weeks) before the frost date.



Peas can be grown throughout the winter in mild-winter areas.



November harvest of lettuce, mache, kale, and turnips

Contrary to common fears, your garden will not come to a screeching halt with the first frost, but will carry on for weeks afterwards. Broccoli, kale, parsley, spinach, arugula, and turnips are just a few of the vegetables that continue to produce well into fall. Some, particularly root vegetables, respond to frosty nights by becoming even sweeter!



Help Seeds Germinate

In early spring, cold soil often delays germination. In summer the problem is the opposite: hot soil can prevent certain seeds, particularly lettuce and spinach, from sprouting at all. Fortunately, there are easy workarounds:

- Start seeds indoors, or in containers placed in the shade, and transplant young seedlings into the garden.
- Sow seeds in the shade of taller plants such as corn or tomatoes to provide protection from the afternoon sun.
- Do what the Old Farmer's Almanac recommends: Moisten the ground and lay down a bale of straw. A week later, the soil under the bale will be cooler by about 10°F.



Spinach germinates best when soil is about 70 degrees F

Extend the Harvest

Compared to protecting tender greens from the blazing summer sun, getting your fall garden to soldier on through cold is a simple matter. A basic cold frame constructed with straw bales and old windows can



Simply covering a bed with row cover fabric can extend the harvest by several weeks

shelter salad greens through early winter even in northern regions. Cool weather crops such as spinach, chard, Asian greens, kale, collards, broccoli raab, and Brussels sprouts need no protection at all to last until the first hard frost. In cold winter areas, cover carrots, beets, and parsnips with a layer of mulch, and harvest until the ground freezes. In regions where frosts are rare, fresh greens and sweet root vegetables can be enjoyed all winter long.

Experiment!

If you've missed the date for late summer sowing, don't despair. Some fall-sown seeds will germinate in fall and then go dormant. Others, depending on the vagaries of the weather, may germinate in late winter.

Either way, the result can be a very early crop of succulent spring greens! Spinach and mache (also called corn salad) are excellent choices for fall sowing; cover young plants with straw when cold weather sets in, and they will come back to life in early spring. Other good candidates are arugula, beets, lettuce, and scallions.

The EZfromSEED Web site shows you everything you need to know about growing plants from seed. It's brought to you by the Home Garden Seed Association (HGSA), an international group of seed producers and seed packet companies committed to supporting home gardening success, specifically through the use of seeds.