



## **Add Flavor to Your Fall Flowerbeds ... with Seeds!**

It's been 30 some years since the term "edible landscaping" was coined, yet the practice of planting vegetables in ornamental beds remains relatively rare. Late summer is the perfect time for a seasonal overhaul. Remove flowers that have lost their fresh appeal and fill in the garden gaps with edibles, and you will enjoy the rewards into fall and, in some regions, through winter.

Just about any vegetable or herb can be incorporated into a flowerbed. Some, however, are more manageable—not to mention attractive—than others. Here are ten unproblematic candidates for fall eating, with planting tips and ideas for integrating them into the landscape.



### **The Contenders**

#### **Lettuce**



You can't go wrong by adding beautiful greens to your ornamental garden. Harvest heads as you need them.

In many parts of the country, lettuce has a longer garden life in fall than in spring, plus there is less worry about it bolting. Start seeds by sowing them in small pots in late summer, and when they are sturdy enough plant them in the garden wherever you find an empty space. Or fill a container with frilly red leaves.

## **Kale**



Lacinato kale makes a strong statement in the fall garden.

Sow your leftover spring kale seeds in small pots in summer; when they are sturdy enough, insert them into your flowerbeds. Kale becomes sweeter with the chill of autumn nights, and as flowers succumb to mildew or frost your fall kale crop will have room to expand.

## **Chard**



Backlit by the autumn sun, ruby chard outshines many blooming plants.

Sow chard seeds in small pots in mid-summer, and plant them in the garden when they have their first true leaves. Chard is particularly beautiful when the fall sun, lower in the sky than in summer, shines through its brilliant veins and crinkled leaves. Position it to take advantage of this effect.

## Cabbage



Conehead cabbages mature fast, and add interest to the fall garden.

Choose fast-maturing mini coneheads for the fall garden. Not only are they sweet, but they mature about 60 days after planting out, much faster than larger varieties. In temperate zones, start seeds at least ten weeks before your fall frost date, and plant them out when they are sufficiently sturdy. As they mature, the heads make interesting front-of-the-border accents. Spray tender seedlings with Bt to protect them from caterpillars.

## Bok Choy



Baby bok choy is as beautiful as it is healthy.

Baby bok choy is a great choice for the fall garden. It matures in as little as 50 days, and makes an attractive clump in a small space. Survey your garden for available gaps, and prepare the soil where you plan to sow seed. Pair with parsley for a beautiful edible duo. Thin baby bok choy plants to stand 4 to 6 inches apart when they are 2-3 inches tall.

## Radishes



Sow radish seedlings wherever you find an empty space.

Radishes may not add much to the aesthetics of your garden, but they are easy to fit in any available space. Loosen the soil, add a little compost, and sow seeds about an inch apart starting about six weeks before the last frost date for your area. Do this weekly for 2 to 3 weeks for a continuous supply.

## Green Onions



Spring onions are perfect for fall harvesting also.

Green onions will grow from spring to fall or, in warm-weather climates, from fall to spring. Loosen the soil and add compost before sowing seed. There's no need to sow in a straight line; get creative and wind your onions between perennials.

## Parsley



Looking for a good mixer? Curled or flat-leaved parsley is a go-anywhere edible plant.

Because parsley is a biennial it remains fresh and green all summer long. In its second year it generally comes back and promptly sends up a flowering shoot. Direct-sow a patch in spring, and in late summer you can transplant clumps, preferably to a spot near the kitchen. When digging, disturb the taproot as little as possible.

## Cilantro/Chervil



Both cilantro and chervil have beautiful foliage, and blooms that attract pollinators.

In warm winter regions, these fall-planted herbs stay green through the winter, and even in temperate zones they love the cool fall weather. Wait until the hottest days of summer have passed, then loosen the soil and add compost before sowing chervil or cilantro seed directly in the garden. The lacy leaves of these carrot-family herbs complement coarse-textured plants such as yucca, hosta, or heuchera.

## Dill



Fermy, elegant, and tasty dill is perfectly at home in ornamental gardens.

This amenable herb enhances just about any garden combination. Loosen the soil and sprinkle dill seed in mid- to late summer around your roses or in the gaps between perennials. Irrigate as necessary. When the weather is conducive the seedlings will appear, bringing a lacy freshness to your beds and borders, and a flavorful addition to sautéed potatoes, grilled salmon, and other dishes.