

## Over-Wintered Crops

As you start to harvest summer's bounty, give some thought to what you might harvest in winter. July and August are the months to plant most crops for winter and early-spring harvest. Fresh garden produce is especially welcome during these months when store-bought vegetables are usually expensive and often of low quality.

Winters in the Puget Sound area are generally mild. The days are short and usually wet. The spot chosen for winter gardening should be well drained and should receive the maximum amount of sun. Allow your crop as much light as possible by spacing plants slightly farther apart. They need lots of room, and that's easier to find in the fall!

Plants don't really grow much once the season turns cold and dark, so the words "winter gardening" may be a bit misleading. Actually, "garden storage" and "winter survival" might be more accurate. Winter crops fall into these two categories.

Crops to be eaten in late fall, winter or early spring are planted in summer with time to mature before the days turn cold and dark. The garden acts as naturally refrigerated storage, and you harvest as needed.

The second kind of winter vegetables are planted in summer or fall, to over-winter as small plants that mature the following season. These hardy crops survive the cold and may even grow a bit over winter. As soon as the weather warms and the days get longer, they really take off.

At altitudes below 1000' frozen soil is rare, and it can usually be prevented with a light mulch. Many gardeners use floating row cover material or plastic tunnels or cloches to give some protection from the cold. Carrots, radishes, rutabaga and turnips left in the ground for winter eating are often grown under floating row covers to prevent the crop getting "wormy" from carrot rust flies and cabbage maggots. **See Fact Sheet #19 Row Covers for Vegetable Gardens.**

Garden area not occupied by winter crops will benefit from a cover crop. **See Fact Sheet #27 Green Manures.**

**Beets** planted before August 1 will produce a crop of roots. If you want only the tops for beet greens, you can plant as late as September 1.

Regular **broccoli** can be seeded until mid-July and transplanted until mid-August. Fall broccoli usually continues to produce until after Thanksgiving and occasionally until New Years. Purple Sprouting and White Sprouting broccoli are varieties that will over-winter easily. They yield a bounty of small, tasty shoots from April to June.

**Brussels sprouts** require a longer growth season than broccoli. Direct seed by July 1 and transplant by August 1 for a dependable fall crop. In protected spots, harvest can continue into mid-winter.

Sow fall **cabbage** crops by July 1 and transplant by August 1. They will hold in the garden into early winter. Give mature heads a quarter-turn twist to break some roots and decrease the chance of splitting. Savoy

cabbage can be seeded until mid-July and transplanted until mid-August. Other over-wintering types can be seeded from September 1 to 15 for harvest in April and May. Plant **Chinese cabbage** in late July to early August for fall/winter eating.

**Cabbage-family greens** are super-nutritious vegetables and provide greens all winter. In spring, **kale** produces delicious broccoli-like shoots. Plant **collard and kale** seeds in July and transplant until mid-August. Start **mustards and turnip greens** in late August through September. **Bok choy** should be in by mid-August. **Arugula** is sown in September for winter greens with a sharp, nutty flavor.

A fall crop of **carrots** will keep in the garden until used. Plant by mid-July.

Start over-wintered **cauliflower** in early July and transplant by early August. There are a wide variety that mature March – May.

**Witloof chicory (French endive)** can be planted until mid-July. The roots are dug in late fall, placed in a box of moist soil, covered with sand and forced in a warm room for winter greens.

**Cornsalad (lamb's lettuce)** can be planted in early September for fall/winter use or in late October to winter over for spring use.

Plant **endive**, either the curled or broad-leaf types, until mid-July. In October, tie the leaves together to blanch hearts for three days before harvesting. (Blanching is a horticultural technique whereby leaves are prevented from becoming green by growing them in complete darkness. This enhances

flavor.) A straw mulch will permit harvesting into winter months.

**Fava (broad) beans** are planted late October through November for a May – June harvest.

Plant **garlic and shallot** cloves in late October to November 10 for harvest the following summer.

Sow **kohlrabi, rutabaga and turnips** in mid July (mid-August for turnips) for a crop that can be left in the garden and used as needed. Earlier planting may cause the vegetables to become big and woody.

**Leeks** are planted only in the spring but can be hilled or mulched for use all winter.

Sow **lettuce** mid-July through mid-August. Most years, lettuce requires cold protection.

For **green onions**, plant sets any time the soil is dry enough to work, or sow seeds in mid-July to August for winter to spring harvest. For **bulb onions**, seed late July to early September and transplant in October.

Most **radishes** can be planted through mid-September. Winter radishes should be planted in July and can be harvested all winter.

Plant **spinach** in August for winter eating. A September sowing winters over as small rosettes and produces an early spring crop.

Planted in July, **chard** will produce a crop for winter. August and September plantings winter over and produce early the following spring.