



Gardener's Joy

Dirt embedded under fingernails.
Cracked skin stained green.
Salt stings eyes cast downward.
Knees compressed into soil leave only a faint
memory.
Blooms fade and fall victim to the wind.
A seed exists.
Cast by wind.
Buried under mud.
Wedged between rocks.
Stuck in a tree.
Under the forest canopy.
On the open plain.
A rosette fills an empty space.
Fingers squeeze and pull.
Another noxious weed not to be.

By Alan Claunch

PLANTING FOR A FALL HARVEST: FALL VEGETABLES

<https://www.almanac.com/blog/gardening/gardening/second-planting-fall-crops>



Plan a fall garden, especially if you have gaps in your garden after harvesting some of your crops.

Yes, I know that summer is not even half over, but it is never too early to plan for fall. Many gardeners consider fall to be a four letter word but it doesn't have to spell the end of fresh from the garden food.

In fact, in warmer regions, many crops grow just as well in the fall as the spring, especially spinach, Swiss chard, broccoli, and kale. In colder climates, many of these same vegetables are frost-tolerant. Fall planting is also easier in many ways, given fewer insects and diseases, less watering, and more pleasant weather conditions.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING: CHECK FROST DATES
To plan what to plant in your fall garden, **consult the Almanac to find the first frost date for your area.** Where I live, it is around September 20 but often it is another month before we get a killing frost. There is a lot of glorious gardening weather between now and then. Next look at the days to maturity on your seed packets. Even though the days are beginning to shorten, the soil is warmer than it was in May so seeds sown now will germinate much faster.

The Old Farmer's Almanac also has a garden calendar which calculates fall planting dates based on your local frost dates, so it's all figured out for you! See their [Best Dates Planting Calendar](#).

SEED 'EM AND REAP: WHAT TO GROW
Fast growing, tender veggies like summer **squash and zucchini** will bear fruit in 45 to 50 days. Many varieties of **cucumbers** are ready to eat in under 50 days, and **bush beans** take about 6 to 8 weeks to reach a harvestable size. The only problem with these crops is that they will be killed by frost unless you plan to protect them. If you live in an area with a long growing season, this will not be a problem.

**COLD SHOULDER: PLANT
COLD TOLERANT PLANTS**

As the weather cools, plant crops that are cold-tolerant and mature quickly. Salad greens are fast and hardy; **leaf lettuces** are ready to cut in 45 to 50 days. Looseleaf and butterhead leaves can be harvested at just about any time in their development.

Sometime lettuce seeds have difficulty germinating in hot soil, so I start my new baby lettuces in flats that I can keep well-watered and shaded until the plants are large enough to transplant into the garden.

Some varieties of lettuce such as 'Winter Marvel' and 'New Red Fire' are more cold-tolerant than others.

A quick crop of [radishes](#) will be ready for the salad bowl in 25 days. Other root crops, like [carrots](#), [beets](#), and [turnips](#), will take longer, but are worth the wait since they seem to get sweeter as the days get cooler. [Snap peas and snow peas](#) start to bear in 60 days and peas that mature in cold weather seem especially sweet and crisp. Pea vines can survive temperatures down to 25 degrees.

Fall-planted [spinach](#) does much better than spring planted spinach since it is maturing during the cool weather it loves instead of struggling in the summer heat. [Swiss chard](#) is another hardy green that reaches an edible size in 25 to 30 days. Given some extra protection when frost threatens, spinach and chard can last well into fall. If well-mulched, in many parts of the country spinach will winter over and give you an extra-early spring crop of the best spinach you've ever tasted!



[Broccoli](#) and kohlrabi mature well in cool weather and will not be bothered by the cabbage moth larvae as much as spring-planted cold crops are. [Kale](#) is a winter staple. Try blue-green 'Winterbor' or pretty purple 'Redbor'. They can be harvested long after other greens have been killed by

cold weather.

The real stars of the fall garden are the [Asian greens](#). Quick maturing varieties can be harvested in 45 days. Tatsoi, pac choi, mizuna, and napa are all in the brassica family. They can weather a frost and will last through a hard freeze if given some protection.

Some Asian greens like hon tsai tai and mibuna are more closely related to mustard (also a brassica), which gives them tangy leaves that add a pleasant bite to an autumn salad or stir fry. Other greens such as arugula, mache, minutina, and claytonia can withstand quite cold temperatures, providing you with lots of interesting salads and cooked greens well into late fall.

Fall can be a second spring. After harvesting garlic in July, there will be lots of room for fall crops. Freshen up the empty beds with some compost and get ready to plant your second garden.

Want even more advice on planting your fall garden?

- You'll love this video on [Succession Planting:](#)

[How to Harvest More from Your Vegetable Garden.](#)

Here is a very handy chart from *The Old Farmer's Almanac* which lists the [last planting dates for second crops in your region.](#)



GREAT GARDEN IDEAS: WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

www.almanac.com/content/great-garden-ideas-whats-old-new-again

Where to start? Just take a look around to see what you can find that may have a second life as a unique garden addition. You may not even need to buy anything if you rethink some objects that are in your attic or garage. The only limitation to your garden transformation is your imagination!

- An old painted dresser gets a new life as a multilevel planter, while adding a sense of fun. Open drawers hold plantings and bring the eye upward to hanging wall baskets. A bold color, such as blue, adds a cool, contemporary feeling. (Photo: Fiona Lea/GAP Photos)



Kim Beckmann)

Vintage food cans with the lids removed make interesting herb planters. The variety of the foliage, as well as the designs on the cans, adds visual interest. A single container is charming, but several grouped together create a strong focal point. Place the containers outside your kitchen for an easy-to-reach herb garden. (Photo: Friedrich Strauss/GAP Photos)

Most of us have more opportunity to enjoy our gardens while home in the evening. By adding lights, you can transform a garden into a sanctuary. Here, tea lights inside old mason jars are hung by string (or wire). (Photo: Lynne Keddie/GAP Photos)

Old painted birdhouses provide a refuge for your garden's feathered visitors but also do double duty as a support for a hanging basket of colorful petunias. (Photo:



- Melissa Will from Ontario creates inspirational garden art using repurposed objects. Her favorite garden art projects are her chandeliers. Using lamp crystals that she found at a thrift store, Will fashioned some homemade bling for her garden by attaching the crystals and blue glass beads to an old metal colander. She keeps the chandeliers in the garden year-round to watch the winter sunlight sparker through the crystals. (Photo courtesy Melissa Will)



14 Simple Gardening Tips and Tricks

<http://www.hgtv.com/design/outdoor-design/landscaping-and-hardscaping/14-simple-gardening-tips-and-tricks>

Here, the latest tips and tricks from Paul James, host of *Gardening by the Yard*:

1. To remove the salt deposits that form on clay pots, combine equal parts white vinegar, rubbing alcohol and water in a spray bottle. Apply the mixture to the pot and scrub with a plastic brush. Let the pot dry before you plant anything in it.
2. To prevent accumulating dirt under your fingernails while you work in the garden, draw your fingernails across a bar of soap and you'll effectively seal the undersides of your nails so dirt can't collect beneath them. Then, after you've finished in the garden, use a nailbrush to remove the soap and your nails will be sparkling clean.
3. To prevent the line on your string trimmer from jamming or breaking, treat with a spray vegetable oil before installing it in the trimmer.
4. Turn a long-handled tool into a measuring stick! Lay a long-handled garden tool on the ground, and next to it place a tape measure. Using a permanent marker, write inch and foot marks on the handle. When you need to space plants a certain distance apart (from just an inch to several feet) you'll already have a measuring device in your hand.
5. To have garden twine handy when you need it, just stick a ball of twine in a small clay pot, pull the end of the twine through the drainage hole, and set the pot upside down in the garden. Do that, and you'll never go looking for twine again.
6. Little clay pots make great cloches for protecting young plants from sudden, overnight frosts and freezes.
7. To turn a clay pot into a hose guide, just stab a roughly one-foot length of steel reinforcing bar into the ground at the corner of a bed and slip two clay pots over it: one facing down, the other facing up. The guides will prevent damage to your plants as you drag the hose along the bed.
8. To create perfectly natural markers, write the names of plants (using a permanent marker) on the flat faces of stones of various sizes and place them at or near the base of your plants.
9. Got aphids? You can control them with a strong blast of water from the hose or with insecticidal soap. But here's another suggestion, one that's a lot more fun; get some tape! Wrap a wide strip of tape around your hand, sticky side out, and pat the leaves of plants infested with aphids. Concentrate on the undersides of leaves, because that's where the little buggers like to hide.
10. The next time you boil or steam vegetables, don't pour the water down the drain, use it to water potted patio plants, and you'll be amazed at how the plants respond to the "vegetable soup."
11. Use leftover tea and coffee grounds to acidify the soil of acid-loving plants such as azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias, gardenias and even blueberries. A light sprinkling of about one-quarter of an inch applied once a month will keep the pH of the soil on the acidic side.
12. Use chamomile tea to control damping-off fungus, which often attacks young seedlings quite suddenly. Just add a spot of tea to the soil around the base of seedlings once a week or use it as a foliar spray.
13. If you need an instant table for tea service, look no farther than your collection of clay pots and saucers. Just flip a good-sized pot over, and top it off with a large saucer. And when you've had your share of tea, fill the saucer with water, and your "table" is now a birdbath.
14. The quickest way in the world to dry herbs: just lay a sheet of newspaper on the seat of your car, arrange the herbs in a single layer, then roll up the windows and close the doors. Your herbs will be quickly dried to perfection. What's more, your car will smell great.

