

JULY: Planting a Fall Edible Garden, Preserving, & Composting

So, it's summer time so you likely are wondering, "why is this newsletter about planting a fall garden?!" Well, that is because it is time to start planning (and planting) your fall garden! (And, yes, you can do it!) Are you interested to know what works in your garden zone for fall, how to choose seeds/seedlings, or where to put the garden? Read on for some planning and planting ideas!

On page 2, you will find some quick tips for preserving your harvests, and a tidbit on composting to give your gardens some natural fertilization to promote growth of your nutritious produce!

Planning and Planting for a Fall Edible Garden

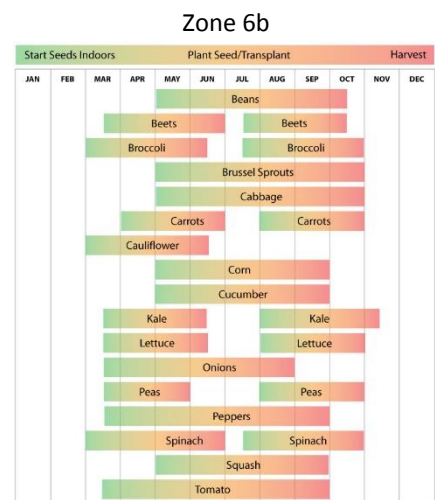
Just like when planning for spring and summer edible gardens, there are some considerations based on where you live, and what foods you like! Below we share topics for your review when planning, and planting your fall garden!

What garden ("plant hardiness") zone am I in?

The first thing you need to do when planning your fall edible garden is to find out your gardening, or plant hardiness, zone. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has an easy-to-use online tool: <http://bit.ly/zonegarden>. Check it out! You can even search by ZIP Code!

What vegetables can I plant in my fall garden?

After you determine your garden zone, you can use other sites, such as <http://bit.ly/plantschedule>, to see what edible plants can be planted for a fall harvest. In the image to the right (which is for Zone 6b), the yellow/orange tells you when to plant, and the red tells you when to harvest. Thus, for zone 6b, you would consider planting beets, broccoli, carrots, kale, lettuce, peas, and spinach right now for fall harvesting!



Do I plant seeds in the ground, start seeds indoors, or buy seedlings?

The decision about what type of process to use to start your garden, buying seedlings or growing your own from seeds, is up to you! Remember you need much more lead-up time if you are growing (indoors or outdoors) from seeds, whereas buying seedlings from your local nursery or farmers' market helps you speed along!

- Good resources for starting your seeds indoors: <http://bit.ly/earlyseeds2> and <http://bit.ly/earlyseeds>.
- Good resources for starting seeds outdoors: <http://bit.ly/seedoutdoor>, <http://bit.ly/seedoutdoor2>, & <http://bit.ly/seedoutdoor3>.
- Check out this resource for transplanting your seedlings (grown indoors, or bought): <http://bit.ly/seedlingplant>.

Consider planting some **edible perennials** – plants that come back year after year! Asparagus, fruits, nuts, and others – read more here: <http://bit.ly/eatperennials>



July: Preserving Produce

So, this summer your edible garden is producing with leaps and bounds! What do you do with all the produce bounty? There are a number of easy (yes easy!) ways to preserve your fruits and vegetables so you can enjoy them throughout the year!

LEARN MORE ABOUT PRESERVING YOUR PRODUCE BELOW!

Many of us hear the words “preserving,” or “canning,” fruits and vegetables and get anxious, thinking the process is very complicated, and time consuming. On the contrary, “preserving” your edible garden bounty can be done in a variety of easy-to-do ways – drying herbs, freezing herbs, freezing sauces, freezing fruits and vegetables, pickling, and so forth. What can be preserved, and what are the processes involved? Read below to reap the rewards of your home-grown edibles all year long!



E-book on Preserving

A great easy-to-read e-book that tells you how to preserve produce in a variety of ways is found at: <http://bit.ly/preservebook>. Check out dried, frozen, pickled, and more!

How to dry your bounty for later consumption – herbs, vegetables, and fruits. Many items you grow in your garden can be dried for later use/consumption. You may have seen trail mix with dried fruits and nuts, spices in jars you bought from the store, dried tomatoes you bought at the store for recipes, etc. You can dry all of these yourself, using home-grown bounty! Check out this great page for some instructions on drying a variety of items: <http://bit.ly/CHGdry>.

How to store your vegetables without a root cellar. In the old days, houses often had root cellars to keep produce fresh for months at a time. So what can we do in current times to preserve our fresh produce for a few months after harvest? Find a cool location in your home (that stays below 60°F; or a fridge). Check your vegetables regularly and remove any that show signs of rot. For more information, including information on specific produce stored this way check out: <http://bit.ly/nocellar> & <http://bit.ly/storepreserve>.

How to preserve without canning – Freezing! Yes, you can store fruits and veggies without having to go through the full canning process – by freezing your bounty. Most of the time, vegetables and/or fruits will need to be blanched and dried, and some peeled, before freezing. Checkout: <http://bit.ly/blanchfreeze> & <http://bit.ly/blanchfreeze2>.

COMPOSTING!!

Do you compost? Do you know what composting is? How hard is it to compost? What can you do with compost? Lots of these questions will be answered at your Park & Rec agency program this year. In the meantime, get a head start on what this food recycling → natural fertilizer process is: <http://bit.ly/CHGcompost> & <http://bit.ly/CHGCompost2>.

