

I see that many home gardens that were started this spring are coming to an end this year. A few plants are still putting out but many have finished producing quality vegetables. Spring gardening has really grown in past years and many of us enjoy getting out, tilling the soil, planting and babying our vegetables until harvest. We truly enjoy that fresh, home grown flavor. Just this week alone I've heard a couple of people complain that they wouldn't be able to eat a fresh tomato until next year because they don't like the flavor of the tomatoes you can buy from the store.

That being said, I thought this would be a good time to talk about putting in a fall garden. For fall planting we want to be sure to get started as soon as possible, according to recommended planting dates. If we plant too late, the plants will grow but not produce up to its potential before the first frost. Since timing is so important with fall crops, choose crops that will produce well within this short time. Look for fast-maturing and determinant of bush type cultivars to ensure a good yield before frost.

Crops that you can seed in August include, summer squash, snap beans, turnips, cucumbers, southern peas, mustard, Irish potatoes, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, beets, and a few others. You can plant transplants of tomatoes during this time also.

Several of these crops can tolerate a hot start, so crops like cabbage, collards and Swiss chard can be seeded in summer through September. Swiss chard is considered a year round vegetable. Others like Chinese cabbage, kale, mustard, and turnips should be seeded August through early October for best success.

A particular challenge for fall gardening is irrigation. With the beginning of the fall gardening season, typically being during our hottest and driest part of the summer, proper irrigation is so much more important in order to maintain proper soil moisture. Drip systems or soaker hoses are your best solutions to maintain good moisture levels. Sprinkler systems would be your least desirable method and could cause a variety of other issues.

If you're interested in started your own fall garden and don't know where to begin or even if you just have a question or two, come by or call me. We also have several publications that are full of useful information on vegetables, planting dates, varieties, and fertilizers.