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Horticulture News

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Current Date: 7/29/24

Release Date: as soon as possible

Have you ever tried to plant a fall garden? Fall is often overlooked because people have lost interest under the summer heat but it is a great time to grow vegetables! Crops planted during the late summer conditions ripen under cooler temperatures, which often make the bounty better than spring-planted crops.

Just imagine the taste of fresh lettuce, spinach or other crops ripe for the picking on a cool, crisp, autumn day. That dream can happen easily with a little planning in July, August, and September.

Crops that are best adapted to fall culture are mainly the cool-season vegetables, as well as cucumbers, summer squash and green beans. The first frost will damage some crops, but others will continue to thrive in the cool weather.

Planting dates are influenced by how long it takes for the crop to develop and its ability to withstand a freeze.

Late July through early August

Cucumbers, summer squash and beans can be planted from late July through early August. Transplants of broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage can be planted about the same time.

Early to mid-August

Carrots and beets are planted from early to mid-August.

Early September

Lettuce, spinach, radishes and turnips can be planted in early September.

Fall planting is different than spring planting

The main obstacles faced by fall gardeners are the extreme conditions under which the plants must establish. The use of transplants is one way to overcome this, as they become established more quickly than seeds do. Set seeds slightly deeper than recommended for spring planting. This helps keep them cool and moist as they germinate and develop roots. Planting a little thicker also helps to ensure a good stand. Thick plantings can be thinned for proper spacing. Placing a thin layer of mulch over the seed row will reduce the chance of seeds being washed out and of soil compaction from water. The mulch will help conserve moisture under the hot Kansas sun.

Water and fertilizer

Water on a regular basis or as needed as the garden becomes established. A light application of fertilizer may be helpful, as much of the spring-applied nutrients have been used. There are no

other special requirements for fall vegetable gardening. In fact, there may be fewer weeds and also a decrease in insects and disease after the summer is over.

Plan for your fall garden. A small space in the landscape will be just right for a planting of lettuce or a patch of radishes. You will be sure to enjoy the fruits of your labor in the fall with a tasty treat from the garden.