

Tips for Year-round Vegetable Gardening

Q - My garden is growing and beginning to produce vegetables. I have heard that gardening can be done year-round or at least most of the year except winter. Can you give me some pointers?

A - Vegetable production is growing in popularity for folks in our area. The value of home vegetable gardening includes having fresh and nutritious food available to eat. We also benefit from the exercise and fresh air in tending our gardens. To keep the benefits going year-round from your garden UT Extension has well-researched resources to help you do that.

June, July, and August are times to enjoy your hard work from the spring, but while you are enjoying your produce be sure to continue planting. Plant crops in succession to provide a yield for a longer growing season. There is still plenty of time to plant vegetables, both succession plantings and true summer vegetables. Bush beans can be planted through mid-July; cucumbers can be planted through the first week of August; eggplant can be transplanted through late July; summer squash can be direct seeded through mid-August.

There are many other important factors in producing abundant and high-quality vegetable crops which include preferred soil types, planting, care, and harvesting, and you can find resources on those topics by searching the UT Institute of Agriculture website:

<https://utextensionanr.tennessee.edu/>.

There is one specific factsheet offered by UT Extension that can help you decide what to plant, when to plant it, and when to harvest. *Vegetable Crop for the Home Garden* is available from the University of Tennessee Extension Publications at:

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/MasterGardener/Documents/Additional%20information-charts.pdf>.

Towards the end of this publication in Table 1 is an overview of production times and the potential yield of garden vegetables. You can also see spring planting time, days to first harvest range, length of harvest season, yield range per 100-ft row, fall planting time, and days to harvest range. This table also displays some of the preferred planting times for a variety of crops. Cool season crops are often planted for both spring and fall production and warm season crops may be produced in one or two crops per year depending on space availability and crop needs.

Fall harvest plantings should be scheduled so that tender crops mature by the first frost date - locally between October 15th and October 24th in most years, but sometimes later depending on where you are gardening in our area.

Other cool season vegetables can last into winter, but generally should be harvested and stored inside in a cool location. Broccoli and cabbage can be direct seeded until the third week of July and transplanted up to late August for fall harvesting. Lettuce, particularly leaf lettuce, can be direct seeded or transplanted until October. If covered with row cover, leaf lettuces can be harvested even in winter as it will survive temperatures as low as 10°F. Brussel sprouts for autumn and winter harvest must be direct seeded before the end of July. Chinese cabbage can be direct seeded for late fall harvest as late as mid-August and will survive as low as 20°F.

Spinach can be direct seeded through July and August and, if protected by row cover, can be harvested through the winter, and will survive to 10°F.

Finally, no matter what time of year, keep your garden area clean. Keep your garden weeded and watered. As early plants complete producing, remove the plants. Keep an eye out for pests and disease and attend to it as quickly as you can. Then harvest nature's bounty and be proud of your hard work. Gardening is one of the most rewarding activities you can enjoy year-round.

Thank you for your question. Happy gardening!

The Northeast Tennessee Master Gardeners