

## **Vegetable Gardening for August** (Published 8/3/2024)

By Earl Hockin, Master Gardener

Undoubtedly this August will be warm, thus you will be most comfortable doing your gardening during early morning hours or in the later evening hours. Many people think that vegetable planting is only done in spring and early summer, from April until late June. The vegetables you plant during that time will be harvested through the months of May to late September. You can enjoy them for dining or preserving. Cucumbers, summer squash, tomatoes, eggplant and peppers should be picked as soon as they are ready. Doing so provides the best flavor and increases the likelihood of more production. If you leave the fruit or vegetables on too late, the plant will stop or reduce production and will be working to create seed maturity. When plants stop producing, remove them to eliminate opportunities for pests and diseases and replant that spot with a cool season vegetable. Additionally, this avoids attracting pests to overly ripe vegetables. To reduce the amount of watering, mulch up to 2 inches thick with grass clippings, dead leaves, or straw so your soil doesn't dry out easily. This will also keep the roots cooler with less stress and results in more production. If it has not been raining a regular amount and you have compost, keep it moist, not wet, so it will continue to decompose.

There are many vegetables that can be directly seeded or transplanted in August for harvest through late October and even beyond. During the first couple of weeks of August you can sow bush bean seeds. Most varieties of bush beans will reach maturity in approximately 60 days after sowing the seeds. Thus, seeds sown in early August can be harvested in early October. Other vegetables to plant in early August include beets, carrots, Swiss chard, collards, kale, kohlrabi, leaf lettuce, summer squash, radish, southern peas, and turnips. August is also the time to transplant cool season brassica including broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, cauliflower and leeks. If covered with a row cover most brassica will survive until the temperature drops to about 15F. During the last week of August, you can sow seeds for spinach. By late September you will be able to harvest baby spinach and mature spinach into October.

Although fall gardening is becoming more popular, only some garden centers have transplants available for fall gardening. It is relatively easy to grow your own transplants of cool season brassica vegetables. In fact, many of these germinate best at temperatures between 70F and 80F. They can be germinated under lights of any kind. Special "grow lights" are not needed. Two ordinary cool white tubes give plants enough light. Keep the lights on for 12 to 16 hours daily, hanging them between 2 and 4 inches above the seedlings. Use soilless seed starting mix and plant the seeds to the depth indicated on the seed package. Keep the seed starting mix moist but don't overwater as that can promote fungal or algae growth issues. A spray bottle used to gently water the container is the best method. Start them at the very beginning of August.

When the plants have 2 or more true leaves move them into a larger container with potting mix by carefully removing them by the root ball. Don't hold by the stem as you may harm the growing tip. A week or more before planting them outdoors start to harden them off by putting them outside in the shade for the first two days for 2 to 4 hours then take them back inside. The next step is to put them in the sun for 2 or so hours and then back in the shade. Increase the time in the sun by one to two hours each day. Ensure they are kept watered. It is best to transplant them on a cool day or late afternoon when the sun has passed its peak.

You can enjoy fresh garden produce long after the summer harvest. Start now to enjoy delicious home-grown veggies for the months to come.

### **Resources**

"Tennessee Home Fruit and Vegetable Garden 2024 Calendar,"

<https://uthort.tennessee.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/228/2024/01/W436-2024.pdf>

"Starting Seeds Indoors,"

<https://extension.umn.edu/planting-and-growing-guides/starting-seeds-indoors>

For more information about gardening, visit UTHORT's YouTube site for helpful videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjS3d1IklH1OZ1Z2qPvhgfQ>

**How do I ask a question?**

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at [www.netmga.net](http://www.netmga.net). Click the link at the top of the page, "ASK A MASTER GARDENER" to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.

*The Master Gardener Program is offered by the University of Tennessee Extension. The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to train people as horticultural-educated volunteers. These volunteers work in partnership with the local Extension office in their counties to expand educational outreach, providing home gardeners with researched-based information.*