



FALL PLANTING TIME!!

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Spring is long gone and done, summer is winding down, and plants like tomatoes and zucchini have kept many of us busy in the garden, so now it's time to think about fall and planning the fall garden.

Many home gardeners think only of spring when it comes to planning veggie gardens and planting ornamental plants; however, fall is an ideal time to plant all kinds of things from cool-season veggies, turf grasses and perennials to both evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs. During this season the gardener can take advantage of cooler outdoor daytime and evening temperatures and more plentiful moisture in the form of early rainfall.

Why is fall planting a good time for plants?

- There are many varieties of vegetables that do well in the fall and winter.
- Insect and disease pests are not as much of a problem in fall plantings.
- Vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts are better adapted to fall gardening, since they are more likely to produce better quality and flavor when they can mature during cooler weather.
- Fall gardening also helps season so that you can continue to harvest produce after earlier crops have faded.
- Another reason includes the fact that in the fall, the warm soil encourages root growth. Roots continue to grow throughout the winter or, until the ground freezes, or in areas with milder winters roots may continue to grow, as well as, become established.
- The fall-planted plants have an improved chance of becoming well established over winter, while the same plant planted in spring gets a slow start due to cooler soils.
- Additionally, plants that are planted in spring are often subject to the long hot days of summer before their roots have acclimated or become established due to the short time that often occurs between spring and summer versus those planted in the fall.
- The fall-planted plant is far better equipped to deal with heat and drought, when summer arrives, largely due to its well-established root system.
- Fall Plant Sales: For the budget minded gardener there can be an added bonus when many plants go on sale, at the local nurseries, at the end of the summer growing season.

This makes fall planting not only a great idea but a money saving opportunity for you, too.

What are some plants that benefit from fall planting and why?

Fall is an excellent time to grow many vegetable crops that are also spring-planted such as lettuce and spinach that tend to readily bolt, or produce seed, as well as, become bitter in response to both the long, hot summer days.

There are more varieties of vegetables that can be planted in early fall and that grow better in fall or in cool season weather. Examples of some vegetables that do well with fall plantings include cabbage, beets, carrots, and chard.

Note: Planting dates and planting zones vary in both Placer and Nevada Counties due to the diverse micro climates. In some cases even a back and front yard can vary in their micro climates.

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A good source for USDA zones that appear on most see packages:
<http://www.usna.usda.gov/Hardzone/ushzmap.html>

Determining fall planting time:

Timing of fall planting has much to do with soil temperature. Many plants can grow roots when the earth is as cool as 45 °F.

At planting time, the soil temperature at 6 inches deep should be about 55 °F to give plants ample time to start getting established.

In general, finish your fall planting about 6 weeks before your first expected frost date (8 weeks for evergreens). In Zones 7-8, you would count back from the latter half of September, your first frost will likely occur by mid-October. In our area, the rainy season is usually expected to begin in mid October or November. The optimum planting time would also suggest mid to end of September for fall planting.

Getting Seeds Started

Use a light mulch of vermiculite, compost, or potting soil over the seed row to prevent a crust from forming. Seeds of lettuce, peas, and spinach will not germinate well when the soil temperature is 85°F and above. Shading the soil and using a light mulch or straw over the seed row will help keep the temperature more favorable for germination.

Planting the seeds slightly deeper than spring plantings may also be beneficial, since temperatures will be slightly cooler.

Do not allow seedlings and young transplants to dry out Apply 1 inch of water in a single application each week to thoroughly moisten the soil.

Young seedlings may need to be watered more often during the first week or two of growth.

Young transplants may benefit from light shade for the first few days until their new roots become established. This can be accomplished with a light weight row cover.

Frost Protection

Some vegetables that are already growing in the garden will continue to produce well into the fall, but are damaged by even a light frost. Some crops are considered semi-hardy and will withstand a light frost without protection. Others are hardy enough to withstand several hard frosts. Use coverings to protect sensitive plants and extend the harvest.

More tips for fall planting:

- Choose healthy-looking plants at the nursery. Choose balled-and-burlapped or container-grown plants, not bare-root plants.
- Make sure the plants receives ample water (about an inch a week, from rain and/or irrigation) at planting time up until the ground is frozen (if applicable)
- Avoid species that are generally slow to establish, such as magnolia trees, birch, willows, hemlock, oak and hornbeam.

Great plants for fall and winter color

Cool-season flowers bring a splash of color to your garden right when you need it most. When buying fall color-plants look for sturdy plants with good leaf color in six-packs and 4-inch containers.

Where freezes are infrequent, you can plant cheery pansies, snapdragons, English daisies, and more from early fall through late winter. They'll overwinter, filling your borders, containers, and pocket gardens with months of flower power.

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Planning your fall garden

If you're thinking of planting something deciduous, fall is the perfect time to decide what to plant. After all, you need only take a walk or drive to discover which trees and shrubs offer the most in terms of fall color. Beyond the shade they offer in summer, fall color is the most alluring attribute of many deciduous trees and shrubs.

Don't forget the Daffodils!

In late fall, plant daffodil bulbs for a glorious spring show!

References

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