

# Now is time to plant fall vegetable garden

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson

Cooler mornings in October will make it a joy to get out and work in the home vegetable garden. Several delicious and nutritious vegetables will thrive in the fall garden, including cauliflower.

Weather forecasters seem to be in general agreement that temperatures will pleasantly cool down this week.

Cooler mornings in October will make it a joy to get out and work in the home vegetable garden, and better yet, a number of delicious and nutritious vegetables will thrive in the fall-planted garden.

Indeed, some of our favorite vegetables can be grown here with the arrival of cooler weather conditions.

Now, for some of the cool-season vegetables you can try.

My gardening friends know broccoli is at the top of my list for vegetables to grow in the fall garden.

Broccoli is an easy-to-grow and productive fall vegetable. It can be transplanted from mid-September to mid-November. You can plant transplants available at area nurseries now through mid-November.

Space plants 12 to 18 inches apart in rows or beds. The closer spacing will produce smaller heads, but total production is greater since you have more plants per row or bed.

Broccoli heads are harvested when the largest flower buds in the head are about the size of the head of a kitchen match.

It is common for gardeners growing broccoli for the first time to leave the heads on the

plant too long.

Never allow the flower buds to begin to open into yellow flowers on broccoli or the quality of the head will be reduced.

After the main head is harvested, side florets will be produced, and harvesting can continue for several weeks. These florets often double the production of each plant.

Cauliflower is not as easily grown as broccoli but still is a good choice for your fall garden.

Cauliflower should be spaced 18 to 24 inches apart. Again, closer spacing greatly will reduce the size of the head. Cauliflower produces only



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one head per plant, so after harvesting, remove the entire plant from your garden to make way for planting something else.

For white heads, blanch the cauliflower by pulling the leaves up over the head when it is about the size of a silver dollar. Fasten the leaves with a clothespin or twine and check the head frequently. Harvest before the curds of the head start to separate.

Broccoli and cauliflower are heavy feeders and should receive supplemental applications of fertilizer while they are growing — this is called side dressing.

Side dress each plant with 1 tablespoon of general-purpose fertilizer — like 21-0-0 — sprinkled about 3 inches out from the stem every four to six weeks, and water regularly under dry-weather conditions.

Fast, vigorous growth results in larger heads and best quality.

Kohlrabi is not nearly as well known or commonly grown as it deserves. A relative of broccoli and cabbage, it is grown for its round, edible stem, which tastes like a mild, sweeter version of turnip.

Seeds or transplants of kohlrabi can be planted now and throughout the cool season. From transplants, this fast-growing vegetable is ready to harvest in just seven to eight weeks.

Harvest the stems when they range from a golf ball to a tennis ball in size. They are excellent peeled and sliced for vegetable trays, salads, stir fried, steamed or boiled.

Other excellent vegetables recommended for fall gardens include cabbage, kale and collards. All of these can also be transplanted now through mid-November.

Garlic can be planted now through mid-November by pressing individual cloves into the soil with the big end down so the tip of the garlic is about 1/4 inch below the soil surface. Space the cloves 4 to 6

inches apart in rows spaced about 15 inches apart.

Root crops such as turnips and beets are excellent choices for the cool-season vegetable garden.

I recommend direct seeding of root crops into the garden. Although transplants are available, the tiny root the seed first sends out eventually develops into the edible vegetable. If this is damaged, as generally happens when you transplant seedlings, the result is a deformed root.

Once the seeds of root crops come up, the seedlings must be thinned to the right spacing or the roots will not develop properly.

The following are some commonly planted root crops and the proper spacing — beets, 3 to 4 inches apart; turnips, 3 inches; and carrots, 2 inches.

If you seek rapid gratification or feel gardening is a challenge, then try radishes — they are easy to grow and some varieties can be harvested just 22 days from planting.

Be sure to thin seedlings — 2 to 3 inches apart — or you'll end up with all top with no radish plants.

Other vegetables that can be planted this month include celery, Chinese cabbage, endive, leeks, lettuce, mustard, peas — English and snow — shallots, Swiss chard and many herbs such as thyme, sage, rosemary, oregano, French tarragon, lavender, chives, cilantro, dill, mints and parsley.

