

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN

Books can help with fall and winter gardening

Hard to believe, but it's already time to think about a fall and winter vegetable garden. If you grow your own starts from seed, it's already a bit late for some crops, but happily there are people out there who are growing starts for us.

It's a good idea to start by drawing a plan of your available garden space, identifying beds that get the most sun in winter, beds with the best drainage and what is growing where, right now. You'll want to reserve areas with excellent drainage for garlic and carrots and next year's early peas. Mark slower draining areas for soil improvement in fall, followed by a tough cover crop such as bell beans or crimson clover, or at least a mulch of old leaves. Crops that go in later in fall (fava beans, garlic, salads under cloches) can follow tomatoes, peppers and other warm-season crops. Salad greens, carrots, radishes, mustards and cilantro can be sown throughout late summer and early fall as the weather cools.

Look for areas you can clear and cultivate soon to plant a last batch of broccoli or to direct-sow kale and chard. If you missed the summer window for starting some important crops like fall and over-wintering broccoli, you can get starts to plant out now. It's always worth remembering that the widest range of varieties is available to those who grow from seed, but starts are a godsend to those of us who like traveling in summer, or whose gardening energies are fully absorbed by watering and harvesting the stuff already in our garden beds. Be careful to protect the newly planted babies from hot sun, and water regularly.

The opportunity in our area for growing many vegetables through fall and winter, with or without protection, is much more widely appreciated today than it was just a few years ago. One reflection of this is that there is now far more information available on the topic of winter gardening. (There are a few more winter-appropriate varieties available, too, including my favorite, purple sprouting broccoli.) Being an older person, I still reach first for books. Two of my favorite resources are *The Maritime Northwest Garden Guide*, an

inexpensive publication put out by Seattle Tilth that's been around for years, and *The Timber Press Guide to Vegetable Gardening in the Pacific Northwest*, by Lorene Edwards Forkner, published in 2012.

The *Maritime Northwest Garden Guide* is a handy planning calendar for what to do in the garden. Each month's entry is augmented with detailed discussion of a few relevant topics. These include soil, organic fertilizers, compost, pest problems and remedies, cover crops, harvesting and more. Flowers and herbs are included in the monthly seeding lists, with an emphasis on plants for pollinators and other beneficial insects.

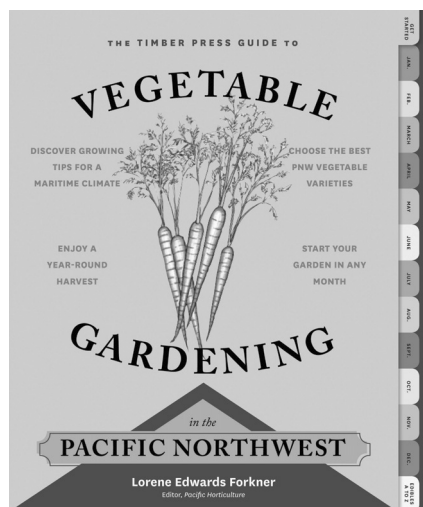
Forkner's *Timber Press Guide to Vegetable Gardening* is a great new addition to the all-season gardener's book shelf — a modern, concise and accessible guide that assumes we will be actively planning, working and harvesting in our gardens more or less all year

round. The book is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the maritime climate, gardening basics and garden planning. Part two, the bulk of the book, is a month by month treatment of the pleasures and labors peculiar to each time of year (the August entry is headed "Relax and Reap"; September's, "Renewed Energy"). The text in this section is broken up with bold, easy-to-spot subheadings for various topics, and for every month there's a two-page spread divided into panels labeled Plan, Prepare and Maintain; Sow and Plant; and Harvesting Now. Unlike some planting guides, this one makes clear distinctions between planting times for starts and for direct sowing.

Much as I enjoy reading more discursive, narrative-style gardening books, I have to admit that part of the allure of Forkner's contribution is the compact, tidy and uniform presentation of the material, which makes it really easy to find stuff. For instance in part three, an A to Z of vegetables, each crop gets a page to itself. An introductory description is followed by three paragraphs headed "Growing," "Harvesting" and "Varieties." I also value the wealth of region-specific tips, but I would love it if Forkner recommended more varieties.

That gap is abundantly filled, however, by my brilliant friend Nick Routledge, whose updated *Big Willamette Winter Gardening Chart 4.0* is available at seedambassadors.org. Once there, just click on "Winter Gardening," and the link will pop right up. This labor of love lists many varieties that have been selected for and/or tested in the Pacific Northwest. It also lists seed sources, sowing and harvest times and levels of winter hardiness. ■

Rachel Foster of Eugene is a writer and garden consultant. She can be reached at rfoster@efn.org



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