

WHAT, ALREADY?

Not too early to plant your fall and winter garden

In flower gardens, there's not a lot to do in August besides attempting to keep up with watering and deadheading, but the food gardener doesn't get a break. Just when watering and harvesting chores are peaking, it's time to think about a fall and winter veggie garden.

You are, in fact, a bit behind the eight ball if you like to grow everything from seed. July's the time to get that going. Nurturing seedlings through July is never easy and this year must have been especially challenging.

Whether your seeds failed or you simply procrastinated, there's still time to grow food for fall, winter and spring harvests.

It's probably too late to grow starts of cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli from seed. Look for some to purchase, and get them in as soon as you can. Regular green broccoli doesn't overwinter well, but it is an important fall crop, continuing to yield good side shoots into late fall.

Try to avoid heat stress in August and September by providing regular water and a mulch. A shade cloth tent may help. Fall-grown broccoli is also susceptible to caterpillars, which can be very destructive for small plants. Remove the tiny cream-colored eggs and green caterpillars by hand, or spray with Bt.

Sprouting types of broccoli are more cold-hardy and will overwinter in an immature state, resuming growth in

late winter. You might get away with sowing purple sprouting broccoli now if you get a move on — it will just mature and crop a little later.

Towards the end of August or the first half of September, plant starts as well. Don't prepare too rich a bed for them. If they grow too fast and sappy they'll be susceptible to damage in an early freeze, as I've learned the hard way. Give them a side-dressing of fertilizer in late winter, maybe with a boost of liquid feed if the soil is heavy and still cold.

Kale is not just trendy. Easy to grow and rarely bothered by pests or disease, it's the great stand-by of the cabbage family. I rely on summer-grown Italian (black) kale for early fall eating, and plant a few starts of Red Russian in well-fertilized soil in August for a late fall and winter crop.

I love the flavor of Red Russian after cold weather sets in. I'll also sow a patch of Territorial's Wild

Garden Kales by the end of the month. The immature plants overwinter easily and give me fresh kale in late winter and early spring.

This summer in the Willamette Valley has been great for tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash and beans, but not so great for salad greens. Fresh ones, ASAP, will be very welcome. Sow fast-growing lettuce and arugula now wherever you have a bit of afternoon shade or can provide it. Scratch in some seed under tall kale plants, or in the shade of a row of pole beans.

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It is also time to start sowing those ultra-hardy winter greens: corn salad, miner's lettuce, chervil and cilantro. All of these survived a hard early freeze in my garden last year without protection, and I harvested them throughout winter and early spring. Cilantro doesn't bolt so fast in cool weather.

If you have the friable soil appropriate for carrots, it's not too late to sow a fresh crop. Merida is the variety recommended for fall sowing. And you can continue direct-sowing many kinds of greens in September, if you have space: Asian greens, chard, mustard and spinach, as well as lettuce and other salad greens.

This year I am going to try escarole. Last fall a few plants of escarole came up from a packet of salad mix and proved amazingly hardy. This year I want more! I'm sowing Diva from Adaptive Seeds in Sweet Home, hoping they are the broad-leafed type I like. I have a lot to learn about chicories and endives. Let me know if you have a favorite for fall sowing.

By October, as we clear out summer crops, it's time to plant fava beans. Shallots and garlic can wait until November. Cover crops like red clover and mustard can be broadcast now, or in beds mulched with leaves as they come available. I like to mulch a bit of well-prepared ground for planting early in the year, usually with fava beans, especially if my fall-planted favas rot in the ground, as happened last winter. I replanted Aquadulce in February and got a good crop in early June.

This year I am planting two varieties I have not tried before: Robin Hood from Renee's Garden and Aprovecho Select from Adaptive Seeds. I may try several sowings: mid and late fall, and again in February if things don't look good. As you can tell, I am very keen on fava beans. I have high hopes of Aprovecho, which was selected nearby in Cottage Grove. And the seeds look quite beautiful! ■

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

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Facilitated event in a safe environment
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Preregistration \$35 until 9/20; \$40 thereafter.
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at (541) 484-0519

LOST WALLET Sun. 7/26 near Charnelton &
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Tennessee driver's license. Please, if any-
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regarding its location let me know. Thank
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16 from 9:00-10:30 am, 2510 Oakmont
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EVENTS CALENDAR

Meeting Consciously: Dating at a New Age

A facilitated event in a safe environment

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6:30 to 9:30pm
541-915-8649

Preregistration \$35 until 9/20,
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