

## Second Harvest

By Bobbi Gustafson

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### **June, July and August are great months to plant for more home-grown produce.**

It's usually around October when I notice that the garden is thinning out and I need to start buying vegetables at the store again. If you're like me, you bask in the glory of your spring garden success, forgetting that there is a second harvest to be had before winter if you plant again at the right time. So consider this your reminder.

Let's start with strawberries. When the June-bearing varieties are done producing, you can mow them down, put some compost around them and keep them watered. They will produce another crop.

Cole crops do well in cool weather. They are all from the same species, *Brassica oleracea*, which includes broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, collards, kale and kohlrabi (see sidebar for suggested varieties). When exposed to cooler weather, cole crops gather sugars in their tissues to act as a natural antifreeze that protects the leaves from freezing and improves their flavor, too.

You should sow most cole crops just after the fourth of July. They should be transplanted no later than six weeks after they are sown. Cole crops love deeply tilled, humous-rich soil with a pH between 6 and 7. Plant a sacrifice row of radishes or mustard in June to lure away flea beetles. If you want radishes to actually eat, put a row cover over them; this will protect them from most insects. You can recycle milk cartons, used plastic pots and other containers for collars for cole crops to keep out cutworms. Simply cut out the bottoms and push them into the soil around the stem.

Rotate your cole crops, waiting two years before you plant them again in the same place. In the spring, sprinkle a couple tablespoons of blood meal or cottonseed meal around them to get them going again. Be sure to destroy your cole crop flowers to eliminate cross-pollination with commercial seed growers in your area.

Plant carrots from the last week in April through the end of July. The last planting for winter can be in September. If you sow them in summer, water them in well and mulch lightly with straw or grass to conserve water. Carrots sown in late summer should be covered with a floating row cover to protect them from insect and worm damage.

Parsnips can be planted in June and July. Turnips and rutabegas can be planted July and August. Brussels sprouts should be planted July 1 and transplanted by August 1. They also should be covered with a floating row cover to protect from insects. Plant a winter

crop of beets in July till the first part of August. You can plant them in September if you're growing them for the greens.

Peas can be sown in early November for a spring crop, but they may not always make it. For a fall second crop, sow mid-July to harvest before frost.

Lettuces are cool-weather crops, so plant them in August and September for winter. Place row covers over them. For extreme weather, you can use a heavier-duty cover, such as Frost Protek, to protect them. Place a wooden box with an operable lid next to the south side of a building. Cover the box with plastic for a makeshift cold frame, and plant your greens in the box. You will have salads nearly all winter. Add spinach, cress, Arugula and corn salad to the mix.

Leeks do well over winter. So do scallions and garlic, both of which are planted in October.

Plant spinach in July and August for a cool-weather crop. White Swiss chard, a vigorous grower, can be planted in June and July.

Usually beans need warm weather—but not Fava beans. Sow them three weeks before the first hard frost. They draw nitrogen out of the air and make it available in the soil for the next crop. They are easily tilled in for organic material that enriches the soil. That will make food for earthworms. And where you have worms, you have rich soil.

Find a seed company that specializes in Maritime Northwest crops and study their catalogs, which are usually free. I have seen seed catalogs devoted entirely to winter crops, and all are packed with valuable ideas and information. Now is the perfect time to start sowing for cooler weather, so why not get back in the garden and get that second harvest started?

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### **Cole crops for Skagit County**

A few cole crop varieties stand out here in Skagit County. Here's a brief list of tried-and-true favorites.

*Broccoli:* 'Purple Peacock,' a broccoli-kale cross, is very sweet. As it matures, it throws out loose heads of purple florets. 'Veronica' is a chartreuse broccoli with little spikes that are beautiful and great conversation starters.

*Kohlrabi:* A great substitute for turnips, kohlrabi is immune to root maggot.

*Kale:* Heirloom Italian kale, sometimes called Lacinato kale, is very dark blue-green, sweet and full of nutrients. Plant it from spring through the end of July. In spring it will develop florets that are very tasty.