

Planting for Fall, and Winter, and Spring...

If summer (that fleeting Pacific Northwest season sandwiched between months and months of overcast and drizzle, broken by the occasional ice storm) has finally arrived, can fall be far behind? It will be here before we know it. While lounging in your lawn chair, envision an abundant fall vegetable harvest. Then head to the garden and make it happen!

To gardeners, the adage “Nature abhors a vacuum” translates into “If you don't plant or mulch that bare earth, weeds will soon appear and eventually take over.” Most all of us have some of those bare spots, or we should make some by pulling out weeds or removing plants which are past their prime.

A lot of tasty vegetables can be sown or planted in July, with a good chance that they will provide fall, and even winter, harvests. One of the ways to lessen the risks involved in July sowing or planting is to profit from the field tests done by “local” seed companies, especially for vegetables that are a little tricky to grow, or ones that are new to you. These Pacific Northwest companies provide advice specific to our geographic area in their catalogs.

Territorial and West Coast catalogs include planting charts that indicate optimum times for sowing specific vegetables. Territorial publishes a winter catalog and devotes a section of their online catalog to plants for winter gardening.

- [Nichols Garden Nursery](#) in Albany, Oregon
- [Territorial Seed Company](#) in Cottage Grove, Oregon
- [West Coast Seeds](#) in Delta, British Columbia, Canada

To determine when to sow a specific variety of seed, note the “days-to-maturity” number on the package or in the catalog; count back that many days from the average earliest hard-frost date for your part of Clark County; and add a good 10 or 20 days to that figure, because of shorter days and cooler temperatures in the fall.

You may find it difficult to get seeds to germinate in July and August. Water the planting area a day or two prior to sowing, rather than afterward, which can cause a crust to form on the soil surface. Cover the newly-sown seeds with a mixture of peat moss and vermiculite or composted sawdust and sand, as these materials do not form a crust. Keep the area moist as the seeds are germinating and while the seedlings are becoming established. Put two or three broccoli or cauliflower seeds at the recommended spacing when you sow; then thin, if necessary, when the seedlings are well-established.

Early July

If you'd care to try a late potato crop, plant by the 4th of July. Are there enough beans in the garden to satisfy you? If not, sow some bush beans by mid-July, since most varieties require at least 55 days to mature. If you don't have parsnips or head lettuce in, consider mid-July your deadline. West Coast Seeds recommends sowing overwintering cauliflower indoors in mid-July and transplanting the seedlings to the garden a month later. If you

prefer to sow the cauliflower in a nursery bed in the garden, start a little earlier. Aim to have your winter crop of Swiss chard sown by mid-July. Plant extra chard, recognizing that you may lose plants to voles, rabbits and/or weather. Fencing to prevent rabbits from entering the growing area, and growing the chard in a poly tunnel or under floating row cover might help. Chard plants which survive the winter will perk up in spring, and so will you, when you realize that you can harvest tender young leaves! Chard which will be used as small leaves in fall salad mixes can be planted into August.

By the End of July

Peas, snap, shell, or snow, should be planted a good two months before the average fall frost date for your area.

Beets planted during July, preferably as early in the month as possible, can be harvested this fall and throughout the winter (unless your voles are extremely hungry...). Because early frosts signal the roots to begin storing sugars for the winter, November-harvested beets can be the sweetest of the year. Lutz Green Leaf, also known as Winterkeeper, can grow to six inches in diameter and hold in the ground until March if covered with a few inches of straw after the tops die back in late fall or early winter.

[Territorial Seed Company](#) offers six types of carrot, as well as one blend, in their Winter Gardening Index. The selections are based on flavor and how well the carrot keeps in the ground. Except for Merida, which can be planted in late September or early October, Territorial recommends sowing carrot seed by the end of July. Use a floating row cover or other protection against [carrot rust fly maggot](#), as there are hatches of the fly in August and October. The carrots can be harvested all winter and into next spring.

Both fall and “sprouting” broccoli should be sown by the end of July, as should fall and winter cabbages, Chinese cabbage, kale, onion sets (if you can find them), parsnips, and rutabagas.

During July and/or August

Vegetables which can be planted throughout July and into August include collards (for winter and spring use), endive, kohlrabi, leaf lettuce, mustard greens, Oriental greens, specialty greens (like corn salad), overwintering onions, radicchio, radishes, scallions, spinach, and turnips.

All gardening includes an element of risk, but look at the rewards when we “win”. Try to find some space in your garden and your busy schedule, and get out there and plant! For more information on topics mentioned in this article, consult:

[Irish Eyes Garden Seeds](#)

[Johnny's Selected Seeds](#)

[Nichols Garden Nursery](#)

[Territorial Seed Company](#)

Colebrook, Binda. *Winter Gardening in the Maritime Northwest: cool season crops for the year-round gardener*. Sasquatch Books, 1998.

Coleman, Eliot. *The New Organic Grower*, 2nd Edition. White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing Co., 1995.

Patterson, P. [Fall and Winter Vegetable Gardening in the Pacific Northwest](#), PNW 548, June 2001, accessed April 22, 2004.

Poisson, Leandre and Gretchen Vogel Poisson. *Solar Gardening*. White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 1994.

Solomon, Steve. *Growing Organic Vegetables West of the Cascades*. Seattle, Washington: Pacific Search Press, 1985.