



Preparing Your Fall Vegetable Garden

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What is the Fall Season? Fall in the SF Bay Area is the “Secret” Season for planting vegetables that thrive in cooler weather and that generally do not make fruit. Much of the Bay Area mimics the coastal environment during September, October and November, making it a good time to plant the Brassicas or Mustard Family crops, as well as peas, carrots, root crops and leafy greens. Many of our favorite herbs thrive during this season as well.

- **Soil Preparation**
 - It's important to rebuild the soil with compost and manure and to spread some balanced fertilizer for the Fall crop.
 - Containers
 - Any of the vegetables and herbs we will discuss can be grown in containers.
 - Potting soil and fertilizer for pots
- **What are the Brassicas?**
 - Brassicas are members of the Mustard Family (some people refer to them as “Cabbage Family”.)
 - Includes Broccoli, Cauliflower, Collards and Kale, and Brussels Sprouts, Kohlrabi, Mizuna, and various Mustards.
 - Favor cooler weather and can tolerate cool nights.
 - Same plant, botanically speaking
 - Rich in nutrition and in need of a well-drained, rich soil.
 - All will need full sun to thrive through the later Fall months.
 - Kale
 - Can be grown year round
 - Space about an 18” between plants.
 - Broccoli
 - Plant in August and September and again in the early to mid spring
 - Look for “early” varieties for a late Fall crop or “overwintering” varieties to plant now for a spring crop.
 - Brussels Sprouts
 - Have been developed to lose the bitterness they once were known for
 - Plant now for a crop that will mature toward Christmas.
 - Most varieties take about 100 days from setting out small starts.

- Leafy greens can be planted in fall to take you well into winter: lettuces, kale, swiss chard, mizuna, mustards, arugula.
- Peas
 - Plant now for a Fall/Winter/Spring crop
 - Edible podded peas and shelling peas can be grown now.
 - Tall peas need support, like a trellis, a tepee or a fence.
- Root crops
 - Plant now (ie: carrots, beets and turnips)
 - Beets and swiss chard are the same plant
 - Beets have been selected for their fleshy roots
 - Chard for its tasty leaves.
- Herbs
 - Sage, parsley, cilantro, chives, rosemary, thyme, oregano and mint will grow just fine through our winters.
 - Put mint in its own container as it will take over if mixed with other herbs
 - Group by water needs
- Flowers
 - Annuals: calendula, pansy, viola, stock, and alyssum
 - Perennial: salvia, coreopsis, yarrow and nepeta.
 - Primroses and cyclamen bloom reliably through winter.
 - Fall veggies don't require pollination by insects for the most part
 - Making flowers available in your garden will encourage many types of insects that will help control other insect pests in the garden.

References: Pam Pierce, Golden Gate Gardening 3 rd ed. 2010 Sasquatch Books, Seattle WA
www.sloatgardens.com/learn Mel Bartholomew, All New Square Foot Gardening 2005 Cool Springs Press, Brentwood TN