

MESSENGER-INQUIRER



University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service



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HORTICULTURE EDUCATION
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Producing More Vegetables in the Same Space

Even though summer started this week, planning begins for a fall vegetable garden. Take advantage of gardening techniques and the growing conditions needed by vegetable crops to extend the gardening season.

One gardening technique is to plant continuously, which is called succession planting. The seeds or transplants of a vegetable are planted every two to three weeks. There is time to plant more warm-season vegetables. Remember that warm-season vegetables are killed by frost. For example, more plantings can be made of tomato and eggplant transplants until July 1; cucumbers, sweet corn, and pepper transplants until July 15; snap beans until August 1; and summer squash such as zucchini and yellow straight neck until August 15. You may want to try early maturing varieties to enjoy more produce before the average first killing frost which is around October 20 for our area.

Some warm-season vegetables such as okra, eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes continue to produce into September if the plants are healthy, so these may not need to be planted again.

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However, if these plants are producing poor quality fruit or you know from experience that older plants do not produce as well, you may want to plant more.

Other warm-season crops such as pumpkins, watermelons, and winter squash may require over 100 days to mature. Check the number of days to harvest before planting more of these vegetables.

Another way to extend the season is to plant cool-season crops again. Cool-season vegetables tolerate a light frost. If these vegetables are planted too late in the spring, summer heat reduces their quality by forcing some to flower and form seeds and others to develop off flavors, bitterness, poor texture, and low yields.

Cool-season crops planted in the fall garden grow well when the days become cooler; most can also withstand a light frost. Cole crops such as broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower are excellent for the fall garden. Seeds of the cole crops should be sown by July 15 to produce transplants for the garden by August 15. Plant transplants of cole crops in the garden during the latest time period of August 5 to August 15.

Several plantings of leaf lettuce and radishes can be made since they are ready to harvest around 35 to 50 days after planting, depending on the cultivar. Due to the heat, it would be best to sow lettuce seeds in the shade of other plants in the garden because the seed does not germinate well at high temperatures. Continue to plant lettuce until September 1 and radishes until October 1.

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Mustard greens, kale, endive, beets, and turnips can be seeded in the garden from July 15 until around August 15. Collards and carrots should be seeded up to August 1. Spinach can be seeded in the garden from August through September 15.

Remember that cool nights slow growth, so the vegetable crops take longer to mature in the fall. Keep this slower-growing pace in mind when you check seed catalogs for the average days to maturity. Some of the best quality vegetables are produced during fall's warm days and cool nights. These environmental conditions add sugar to cole crops and crispness to carrots.

When starting the fall garden, you may have to water the seeds after planting for them to germinate depending on the weather. Continue to watch the seedlings to make sure they have adequate water to grow but not too much to cause them to rot.

Also, keep in mind there will be more insect pests present in the fall garden than in the early spring garden. Identifying the insect pest allows you to use the appropriate control measure for your situation. It is always a good idea to remove plants that have finished producing. By eliminating garden debris, hiding places for insect pests are reduced.

After removing the finished spring vegetable crops, use this space again. Avoid planting closely related vegetables from the spring back in the same rows because of possible disease and insect carryover. Practicing crop rotation helps to prevent the buildup of diseases and insect pests in your garden.

Polyethylene (plastic) row covers made into low tunnels extend the warm season crops into the fall. Some cool season crops may benefit from the row covers as well.

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To construct the tunnels with polyethylene, push hoops made of number 9 galvanized wire into the ground 3 to 5 feet apart. Make the hoops as tall as needed for the crop. When frost is predicted, cover them with clear polyethylene. Bury edges of the plastic in the ground, or pin them down with wire staples, or place heavy bags of rock or sand on it to keep the low tunnel closed. During sunny days in the fall following the frost, vent the tunnel by loosening the sides or ends of the plastic to keep it from becoming too hot for the plants.

Bed sheets can be used as a temporary floating cover over crops when a light frost is predicted. Spun bound materials also provide a couple of degrees of protection.

For more information, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu.

Annette's Tip:

Start thinking about fruits, vegetables, flowers, and potted plants to enter in the Daviess County Lions Club Fair. Entries need to be delivered to the crop display headquarters on Tuesday, July 18, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Entry information is currently available on the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service website <https://daviess.ca.uky.edu/dc-fair>.

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