

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER



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**Producing More with a Fall Garden**  
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Extending the production of vegetables into the fall provides more homegrown, delicious vegetables for your meals. Through successive planting and replanting cool-season crops at the right time, more is produced from your garden.

Continuous planting, called succession planting, is the seeding or transplanting of a crop every two to three weeks. There is still time to plant more warm-season vegetables to be harvested before a frost kills them. For example, more plantings can be made of cucumbers, tomatoes, and pepper transplants until July 15; snap beans until August 1; and summer squash such as zucchini and yellow straight neck until August 15. Try early maturing varieties to enjoy more produce before the first killing frost. Remember that warm-season vegetables do not tolerate 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

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

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Other 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. Some can be planted as seeds or transplants up to July 15 and still produce before the average first killing frost around October 20.

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 while others 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 planting by August 15. Plant transplants of cole crops in the garden at the latest time 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 is best to sow lettuce seeds in the shade of other plants in the garden, as the seed does not germinate well at high temperatures. Continue to plant lettuce until September 1 and radishes until October 1.

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.

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Remember that cool night temperatures 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 in order 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.

Keep in mind that 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 management measures for the situation. It is always a good idea to remove plants that have finished producing. Eliminating garden debris reduces hiding places for insect pests.

After removing the finished spring vegetable crops, this space can be used again. You should not plant closely related vegetables from the spring crop back in the same rows because of possible disease and insect carryover. Practicing crop rotation prevents the buildup of diseases and insect pests in your garden.

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

To construct the tunnels with polyethylene, push hoops, taller than the crop, made of number 9 galvanized wire, into the ground 3 to 5 feet apart at the time of planting. When frost is

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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 them 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 about extending the garden season into the fall, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or [annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu](mailto:annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu).

## **Annette's Tip:**

To reduce the mosquito populations, remember to avoid water forming puddles where possible.

*Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti) toxin is formulated into granules or blocks (Mosquito Dunks) for application to standing water. Follow label instructions.

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