Vegetable gardening in the fall

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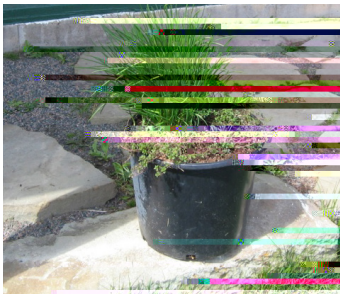
When using a coldframe to extend the harvest season, be sure to close the top on frosty nights to protect the plants from the cold. When the sun comes out the next morning and the air warms, open the coldframe again. Leave it closed if daytime temperatures are low.

Cool-season crops such as cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, spinach, and Brussels sprouts can withstand some cold. In fact, their flavour may be enhanced after a frost. They cannot stay in the garden all winter, but do not need to be picked immediately when frost comes. Kale, spinach, evergreen bunching onion, lettuce, parsley, parsnip, carrots, and salsify are some crops that may survive into winter in the garden. Mulch these vegetables with 20 cm (8”) of mulch to prevent heaving of the soil. Most of these vegetables can be dug or picked as needed until there is hard frost or deep snow cover.



Potting herbs allows for a quick and easy move inside when the weather turns cold. © R. Campbell, Dalhousie.

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Fall is the time to prepare perennial vegetables for winter, too. Most will benefit from a top-dressing of manure or compost and a layer of mulch, which reduces damage from freezing and thawing of the soil.

Dead leaf stalks of perennial vegetables, such as asparagus and rhubarb, should be cut to the ground after their tops are killed by frost, although some people prefer to leave asparagus stalks until late winter to hold snow over the bed.

When tender crops have been harvested and overwintering crops cared for, pull up all stakes and trellises in the garden, except those stakes that are clearly marking the sites of overwintering plants. Clean the remnants of plant materials and soil from stakes and trellises. Hose them down and allow to dry. Tie stakes in bundles, and stack them so that they won’t get lost over the winter. If possible, roll up wire trellises and tie them securely. Store these items inside your attic, barn, or shed in an area where they are out of the way and where rodents and other animals cannot get to them to use as winter nests.

Activity

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Select four of the vegetables in the following worksheet. Calculate the fall planting (P) and harvest (H) dates. Mark ‘P’ or ‘H’ in the appropriate squares on the worksheet. The information you will need is:

FALL VEGETABLE PLANTING DATES WORKSHEET

Instructions: Write the date of your average first fall frost in the space above the 00 column. From there, fill in the dates before that frost, to the left of the 00 column, each 10 days prior to the last. For example if your average first frost date is October 1, write October 1 above 00. Then write September 20 above the column marked 10 to the left of the 00 column, September 10 in the next column to the left, etc. Then to the right of the 00 column, write October 11, October 21, October 31, etc. This will vary depending on location. (*USE TRANSPLANTS)

DATE																										
Days	160	150	140	130	120	110	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	00	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90
Beans, bush																										
Beans, wax																										
Beets																										
Broccoli*																										
Brussels sprouts																										
Cabbage*																										
Chard, Swiss																										
Chinese Cabbage*																										
Collards																										
Cucumber																										
Endive																										
Kale																										
Kohlrabi																										
Leek																										
Lettuce, Bibb																										
Lettuce, Leaf																										
Onion (seed)																										
Garden peas																										
Potato																										
Radish																										
Rutabaga																										
Spinach																										
Turnip																										