

FALL GARDENING

In the St. George Area

By Rick Heflebower, Washington County Horticulture Agent

Here are a few tips that will help you with your fall vegetable garden:

1. The St. George area has a long growing season of approximately 196 days.
2. The average frost date for fall is October 23.
3. Fall temperatures in late August and September can be ideal for many of the vegetables that prefer cool weather.
4. Cole crops such as broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower will do well if put in as transplants.
5. When direct seeding small-seeded vegetables such as lettuce, carrots and spinach, mulch lightly with a bit of peat to help keep moist.

Much of Washington County has a long growing season extending well into October. Higher elevations will likely see frost earlier, so plan accordingly. On transplanted vegetables such as broccoli and cabbage, plan on needing an additional month after planting to allow them to mature. It is true that many of these can withstand a light frost without injury, but they should be well established before frost. Some crops such as lettuce, spinach, and beets will handle the frost quite well. Onions that are to be kept for storage actually do better if planted now and then harvested next summer. Variety selection here is critical. Green onions can be planted spring or fall as they do not take long to mature. Turnips, carrots and beets can be left in the ground quite late into the winter before being harvested.

When direct seeding various crops, consult the package for "days to maturity". This is an excellent indicator as to how long it will take for a specific crop to be ready to harvest. The hot summer sun may form a crust on top of the soil where you have planted new seeds and watered. A light organic mulch will help hold moisture and discourage the crusting while young seedlings emerge. This is not as critical with large-seeded vegetables such as beets, radishes, peas and green beans. These seedlings will push through the ground in all but the very heaviest soils.

If you grew vegetables in the same spot earlier this year (or last), there is a good chance that you will get better results if you apply a little fertilizer to the soil prior to planting. If you forgot, then banding fertilizer to the sides of each row will get the job done.