

Vegetables for Winter Bounty

It hardly seems fair to think about the winter vegetable garden when tomatoes and beans have barely been in the ground. Our cool wet spring means the early season lettuces, radishes, and spinach (those that didn't drown) are still producing. Who wants to even think winter when we are still eagerly awaiting summer? However, now is the time to get started if you want an all season garden.

The following table provides a planting schedule for some late season and overwintering vegetables.

In our climate soggy soil and low light are the main obstacles to successful winter gardening. Without a greenhouse, low light conditions are not in our control. However, many of the seed suppliers (especially here in the Northwest) have bred or market varieties that adapt to these conditions.

Notwithstanding the last couple winters, many of us at lower elevations have experienced frost free or light frost winters without any hard freezes. More of our growing problems come from wet soil and the soggy conditions slugs love. Ways to mitigate these conditions are mulch, raised beds, and using a cloche or hoophouse. Mulch can prevent soil compaction caused by our constant rain and help even out the soil temperature. Raised beds will promote better and faster drainage and can be elaborate or as simple as mounded planting areas. A simple cloche can be made from several lengths of ½" PVC pipe rounded over and anchored in your bed. The structure can be covered with 3 mil plastic and weighted down with water filled milk jugs, pavers, or whatever is handy to anchor the plastic. One end should remain open for ventilation. The cloche can also be used to dry out your bed in the spring and/or provide a nursery area for seedlings.

Since lower temperatures depress the plant's ability to take up nourishment, constant attention to soil health and fertility is the main ingredient to successful winter gardening. So, keep on amending your soil and it will keep on giving back to you.

Vegetable	Direct Seed Date	*Approx. days to Maturity	Comments
Parsnips	July - Beg to Mid	120	Seeds take a long time to germinated and need constant moisture until they do.
Arugula	July - Beg	30-40	Last planting date for early winter enjoyment.
Beets	July - Mid	50-80	Mulch to insure survival at colder temperatures.
Swiss Chard	July - Mid	60	Sometimes even if the plant dies the crown survives untill the next spring.
Endive	July - Mid to August - Beg	50-75	Soggy soil is more a threat than cold - a good cloche candidate.
Kale	July - Mid to August - Beg	60-70	Very hardy. If you let some plants go to seed, you will always have Kale.
Carrots - Summer	July - Mid to August - Mid	70-90	Mulch will improve cold survivability.

Collards	July - End to August - Beg	80	Great cold resistance and can be cut and come again.
Cauliflower - Winter	July - End to August - Mid	75-300	Soggy soil and slugs can do these plants in more than the cold. Days to maturity are variety dependent.
Broccoli- Winter	August - Mid	220-250	Choose biennial sprouting types to over-winter. Rain and slugs may ruin the fall or winter types unless they are grown under a cloche.
Carrots - Winter	August - Mid	220-240	Chose a variety bred to overwinter and survive winter's low light conditions.
Onions - Winter	August - Mid	100-120	Soggy soil can be a problem for overwintered onions.
Spinach	August - Mid to Sept - Beg	40-50	Best overwintered under a cloche.
Cabbage - Winter	August - Mid to Sept - Mid	85 - 220	Days to maturity are variety dependent.
Beans - Fava	August - End	180	These should overwinter and be ready for harvest by mid-April and are usually dependable. Small seeded types are used for winter ground cover and supply nitrogen to the soil.
Lettuce - Winter	September - Beg	65-80	Does best under a cloche.
Garlic	October - Mid	200	These overwinter but are very dependable. If cloves are left in the ground they will return.

*These dates are averages. Check the individual varieties for more accurate information.

References

Seattle Tilth. The Maritime Northwest Garden Guide. Seattle, WA: Seattle Tilth Association, 2009.

Solomon, Steve. Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades. Seattle, WA: Sasquatch Books, 2007.

Carol Miles. [Winter Vegetable Gardening](#). In Washington Master Gardener Handbook .2010 training. Accessed 6/15/2011.