As you start to harvest summer’s bounty, give some thought to winter. July and August are the months to plant most crops for harvest in winter and next spring. Fresh garden produce is especially welcome during these months when store-bought vegetables are usually expensive and often low quality.

Puget Sound area winters are generally mild and the days are short and usually wet. The spot chosen for winter gardening should be well drained and should have maximum sun. Allow your crop as much light as possible by spacing plants slightly farther apart. They need lots of room, but that’s easier to find in the fall!

Plants don’t really grow much once the season turns cold and dark, so “winter gardening” may be a bit misleading. Actually, “garden storage” and “winter survival” might be more accurate. Winter crops fall into these two categories.

Crops to be eaten in late fall, winter or early spring are planted in summer with time to mature before the days turn cold and dark. The garden acts as naturally refrigerated storage and you harvest as needed.

The second kinds of winter vegetables are planted in summer or fall, to over-winter as small plants that mature the following season. These hardy crops survive the cold and may even grow a bit over winter. As soon as the weather warms and the days get longer, they really take off.

At altitudes below 1000’ the frozen soil is rare and it can usually be prevented with a light mulch. Many gardeners use floating row cover material or plastic tunnels or cloches to give some cold protection. Carrots, radishes, rutabaga and turnips left in the ground for winter eating are often grown under floating row covers to prevent the crop getting “wormy” from carrot rust flies and cabbage maggots.

Garden areas not occupied by winter crops will benefit from a cover crop. See Community Horticulture Fact Sheet # 27.

**BEETS** Beets planted before August 1 will produce a crop of roots. If you only want the tops for beet greens, you can plant until September 1.

**BROCCOLI** Regular broccoli (try ‘Waltham’ or “DeCicco”) can be seeded until mid-July and transplanted until mid-August. Fall broccoli usually continues to produce until past Thanksgiving and sometimes until New Years. Purple Sprouting (White Sprouting or Italian Sprouting) broccoli is a variety that will over-winter easily. It yields a bounty of small, tasty shoots from about April to June.

**BRUSSELS SPROUTS** Brussels sprouts require a longer growth season than broccoli. Direct seed by July 1 and transplant by August 1 for a dependable fall crop. In protected spots harvest can continue into mid-winter.

**CABBAGE** Fall cabbage crops (sow by July 1; transplant by August 1) will hold in the
garden into early winter. Give mature heads a quarter turn twist to break some roots and decrease the chance of splitting. Savoy cabbage can be seeded until mid-July and transplanted until mid-August. Try ‘January King’, ‘Wifoy’ or ‘Melissa’. ‘Early Jersey Wakefield’ (or other over-wintering types) can be seeded from September 1 to 15 for harvest in April and May. Plant Chinese cabbage (try ‘Chinese King’) late July-early August for fall/winter eating.

**CABBAGE-FAMILY GREENS** These super-nutritious vegetables provide greens all winter. In spring, kale produces delicious broccoli-like shoots. Plant collard and kale seeds in July and transplant until mid-August. Start mustards and turnip greens late August through September. Bok Choy should be in by mid-August. Arugula (roquette) is sown in September for winter greens with a sharp, nutty flavor. Favorites include ‘Red Russian Kale’, ‘Kailan’, ‘Mizuna’ and ‘Tatsoi’.

**CARROTS** A fall crop of carrots (try ‘Merida’) will keep in the garden until used. Plant by mid-July.

**CAULIFLOWER** Start over-wintered cauliflower in early July and transplant by early August. There are a wide variety of Armado and Walcherin types that mature March – May.

**CHICORY** Wiltoof chicory (French endive) can be planted until mid-July. The roots are dug in late fall, placed in a box of moist soil, covered with sand and forced in a warm room for winter greens.

**CORN SALAD** Cornsalad (lamb’s lettuce or mache) can be planted in early September for fall/winter use or in late October to winter over for spring use.

**ENDIVE** Plant either the curled or broad-leaf types until mid-July. In October tie the leaves together to blanch hearts. A straw mulch will permit harvesting into winter months.

**FAVA BEANS** Fava (broad) beans are planted late October through November for a May – June harvest.

**GARLIC AND SHALLOTS** Plant cloves in late October to November 10 for harvest the following summer.

**KOHLRABI, RUTABAGA & TURNIPS** Sow in mid-July (mid-August for turnips) for a crop that can be left in the garden and used as needed. Earlier plantings may become big and woody.

**LEeks** Leeks are planted only in the spring, but can be hilled or mulched for use all winter.


**ONIONS** For green onions, plant sets anytime the soil is dry enough to work or sow seeds in mid-July to August for winter to spring harvest. For bulb onions, seed late July to early September and transplant in October. ‘Walla Walla Sweet’, ‘Sweet Winter’ and ‘Buffalo’ winter well for a June harvest.

**RADISHES** Most radishes can be planted through mid-September. Winter radishes (Oriental types and Black Spanish) should be planted in July and can be harvested all winter.

**SPINACH** Plant spinach in August for a winter eating. September sowings winter over as small rosettes and produce an early spring crop. ‘Tyee’, ‘Skookum’, ‘Winter Bloomsdale’ and savoy types are winter-hardy.

**SWISS CHARD** Planted in July, chard will produce a crop for winter; August and September plantings winter over and produce early the following spring. ‘Rudy’ appears slightly less hardy.