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# Grow a successful fall garden

Choose crops that have the shortest season and are rated on the packet as less than 70 days.

## *Follow these tips to extend your growing season*

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With a record hot, dry growing season coming to a close, you might be ready to throw in the towel on your vegetable gardening for the year. However, if you still have access to water in this dry year, you may want to extend your gardening season for another few months. Fall food gardens in Douglas County are not only possible but usually very rewarding if you follow a few simple guidelines.

In most years, late August and September have some of the warmest weeks of the year. This is important for fall gardens if you intend to direct seed vegetables.

To have a successful direct seeded fall garden you need to plant in the last half of August or the first half of September. The soil is still warm enough at that time to germinate any type of seed. With shorter days into the last half of September and beyond, the soil cools dramatically making transplants a more successful way to put in new crops.

In Douglas County, we normally have a frost free growing season that will extend to early November. If you plant in late August, you will have about twelve weeks of good growing weather. During the first half of that time, the daytime high temperatures will often reach the 80s, while the last half of fall will have highs in the mid 50s. Knowing this, it is important to grow plants that get as much early growth as possible and will do well with lower temperatures as they mature.

There are a wide variety of vegetables that will do well in the fall



garden outdoors. But let me first advise you to not grow the warm season crops of summer without a greenhouse or plastic tunnel.

The crops that do well in the fall would include all the crucifer family: broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, and collards. You can also direct seed beets, carrots, leeks, scallions, lettuce, radishes, peas, spinach,

and turnips.

When choosing one of these crops look for the shortest season varieties that are rated on the seed packet as less than 70 days. That will generally give you the best chance of getting your crop to maturity.

Another bit of advice for the fall garden is to add some compost and lime to the soil,

if needed, between the summer garden and the fall garden planting. Once the fall crop seedlings are up and growing, don't forget to fertilize them. As soil gets cooler in fall the soil microbes are slower at converting organic forms of nitrogen to available forms of nitrate that will keep your plants growing fast.

If our current dry spell continues into fall, you must keep the irrigation going on a regular basis. As the weather cools into October you can then cut back on the watering schedule.

If your garden soil is heavy clay, you must be careful not to overwater as the days cool off. If rain returns on a regular basis, you may find yourself with too much water. The best practice for a wet fall is to construct a plastic hoop house over a portion of your garden to keep the excess rainfall away.

To learn more about fall gardening and other types of gardening, consider joining the Master Gardener training program that begins Jan. 5, 2016. Our orientation day for the new class will be Nov. 4, 2015, at 11:30 a.m. in the OSU Extension office auditorium. You should register now through November at the OSU Extension office for this new class. For more details and forms, check the web page at [extension.oregonstate.edu/douglas/](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/douglas/).

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