

FOOD WE PLANT IN THE FALL!

We have two complete seasons for vegetable gardening in the Sacramento Valley! September thru November are ideal for planting many leafy greens and root crops for winter and spring harvest.

Bean, Broad or Fava -- grown as cover crop and for edible seeds.

Great for the soil! Deep roots break up clay, suppress weeds, and add nitrogen. Fragrant flowers. Some people eat the beans; some people are very allergic to them. Plant as late as December

Beets -- grown for roots and greens.

Suggested varieties: Detroit Dark Red, Early Wonder, Chioggia, Lutz's Greenleaf; cylindra (elongated)

Beets are easy, very sweet, and store nicely in the garden. Best results when planted early in the fall, but can be planted as late as November, or in February.

Broccoli -- grown for immature flower heads.

One of the easiest winter vegetables. Sept. plantings may give heads by early December. Later plantings 'head up' in February. Romanesco is the pale green Italian heirloom. Broccoli raab is a related species grown for greens and immature flower heads. Sprouting broccoli is another variety grown just for the small immature flower heads.

Brussels Sprouts -- grown for lateral buds on flower stems.

Tricky; needs a long season. After July is too late! Aphids are a hassle to manage. Many people don't like the flavor due to a genetic characteristic which makes them sensitive to bitter compounds in the sprouts; other people don't even taste that.

Cabbage -- grown for leaves.

Suggested varieties: Green Acre, Savoy

Short season types are easier here. Plant in Sept. or early Oct. to give the heads time to form, harvest in February. Chinese cabbage is a different species, takes more space but cultivation is the same.

Carrots -- grown for roots.

Suggested varieties: Little Finger, Danvers Half-long, Chantenay; Orbit (round)

Shorter, stouter types best unless soil is very loose. Very slow to germinate; pour boiling water over seed in a bowl, then sow it the next day. Or plant with radish seeds; by the time you're harvesting the radishes, the carrots are beginning to sprout.

Cauliflower -- grown for immature flower heads.

Suggested varieties: Early Snowball

More vulnerable to weather and pest problems than other winter veg's. Slugs and aphids are a real nuisance, getting up in the flowerhead as it develops.

Celeriac -- grown for enlarged stems.

Weird thickened stem that you steam or boil. Plant early in fall to give it time to develop. Maybe buy one in the store first to see if you like 'em?

Celery -- grown for leaf stems.

Not difficult, but strong-flavored in the home garden since we don't blanch the heads.

Celtuce -- grown for enlarged stems.

Almost as weird as celeriac. Plant early in the fall to give it time to develop.

Chard, Swiss -- grown for leaves and leaf stems.

Suggested varieties: Bright Lights, Rhubarb (red)

Pretty, easy, produces nearly year round. Cut back in spring when weather gets warm to keep fresh foliage sprouting. If you just let aphids go on them in summer, beneficial insects are attracted and help control aphids elsewhere in the garden.

Chicory, Belgian endive -- grown for roots, leaves.

Suggested varieties: Magdeburg

Roots of this type are roasted and added to coffee (mostly in Louisiana). Witloof chicory is grown for the edible leaves, which are an acquired taste; this one is grown in darkness in the last stages to produce the fancy blanched Belgian endive. A wild relative grows as a weed in this area, with pretty blue flowers and seeds which spread dandelion-like on the wind.

Cilantro, coriander, Chinese parsley -- grown for leaves, used as herb.

Tricky. Needs cool but not freezing weather; goes to flower right away in spring and summer (seed is coriander). Best planted in fall. Tastes like soap to many of us, due to a genetic quirk.

Collards -- grown for leaves.

Basically an open leaf-type of cabbage. Easy to grow; plant anytime late summer through winter, then harvest leaves from fall through spring.

Corn Salad -- grown for salad greens.

One of those trendy greens people put in salads. Also very ornamental for planting in mixed winter color bowls with pansies, kale.

Cresses -- grown for leaves.

True watercress grows on the edges of streams in fresh, clean water and prefers consistently cool conditions. The other cresses are grown as substitutes. Garden cress is faster, easier than Upland cress. Very fast, grows best in cool weather. Plant from seed in fall, harvest during fall and winter. Used in salads and sandwiches.

Endive, Curly; Escarole -- grown for salad or cooked greens.

These are grown for leafy greens, similar to lettuce. It's tricky to blanch them--you have to tie the outer leaves around the interior and if the weather is wet the head will rot. But the leaves can be used in soup, much like chard. Belgian endive is a kind of chicory grown for the leaves.

Fennel, Florence -- grown for fleshy stems.

Slice thin in salads, or saute them. Easy to grow and will reseed. Leaves are a food source for swallowtail caterpillars in spring. Flowers draw beneficial insects.

Garlic -- grown for bulbs, used for seasoning.

Plant disease-free bulbs in fall. Push over foliage, start watering less often in late spring. Harvest early summer.

Kale -- grown for leafy greens.

Suggested varieties: Russian Red

Very productive, easy, and really good for you. Too bad it tastes boring. Flavor is sweeter after we've had some frost. Plant anytime in fall or winter. Chinese kale is a similar leafy vegetable, also very easy to grow. Ornamental kale is also edible, though fibrous.

Kohlrabi -- grown for enlarged stems.

Weird cabbage relative with bulb-like stem, available in green or purple. Sept. plantings may yield in Nov.; later plantings in Feb. My dad loves this! The name means 'cabbage-turnip' in German.

Leeks -- grown for stems and leaves, used for seasoning like onion.

Very easy. Can be perennial if you cut carefully, leaving 1/2" above the ground, so that it resprouts. Reseeds if allowed to flower.

Lettuce -- grown for leafy greens.

Suggested varieties: Bibb, Black-seeded Simpson, Lollo Rossa, Prizehead, Romaine, Tom Thumb (cute!)

Plant all fall and winter; great in pots. Leaf types most successful here; tight head types (Iceberg) will rot in overcast weather.

Mustard greens -- grown for leafy greens.

Very easy to grow. Allow them to reseed around your veg garden and orchard, as the flowers draw beneficial insects. Chinese mustard and Cabbage mustard are similar and also easy to grow. Mizuna is Japanese mustard, a fast-growing mustard with sweet, spicy flavor.

Onions -- grown for bulbs (and leaves) used as seasoning.

Suggested varieties: Stockton yellow, Stockton red, Early California red, Fresno White, Red Torpedo, Walla Walla.

Plant from bare-rooted seedlings (easiest) in Nov. - Dec., or from seed in early fall. Plants grown from bulbs usually try to flower, leading to hollow bulbs. Like nitrogen fertilizer in winter. Harvest May - June.

Onions, bunching -- grown for leaves used as seasoning.

Suggested varieties: Welsh, Spanish

Easy to grow; multiply but don't form bulbs. Japanese bunching onions are a type of multiplier onion like shallots, forming bulbs and increasing freely, but mostly grown for the leaves.

Oyster plant, Salsify -- grown for roots, eaten cooked.

How did someone figure out this was edible? White salsify and black salsify (scorzonera) form tap roots with mild oyster-like flavor.

Pak-choi -- Asian vegetable, grown for cooked greens.

Very easy; harvest in just a few weeks from seed planted in early fall, or in spring from seed planted in late fall.

Parsley Root -- grown for roots, eaten cooked, and leaves.

Another weird one: this is a parsley that is grown for the root, which looks like a white fleshy carrot. The leaves are edible, too.

Parsnip -- grown for roots, eaten cooked.

Plant in early fall to give the roots time to develop. Not very popular, but interesting sweet/nutty flavor. I sneak them into winter stews.

Pea: Edible-pod, Sugar, Snow -- grown for green seed pods.

Suggested varieties: Oregon Sugar Pod II, Dwarf Grey Sugar

Timing is key for all peas! Sept. to mid - Oct. is best. Pre-germinate seed indoors if planting in late Oct. or Nov. Feb. may work unless it gets hot early. Snow peas are the flat ones used in stir-fry. Edible-pod (sugar) peas are eaten whole, shell and all, or can be shelled.

Pea: Shelling -- grown for edible seeds, eaten green.

Suggested varieties: Novella II, Maestro, Tall Telephone

The old-fashioned shelling peas..Most peas need some light support. Novella is unique: leaves have all been replaced by tendrils, making a wiry mound that resembles a tumbleweed. Very productive.

Potatoes -- grown for roots, eaten cooked.

Suggested varieties: Yukon Gold, Yellow Finn, Red La Soda, White

Easy, fun. Usually spring planted, but early fall plantings can be successful. Homegrown potatoes are sweeter than store-bought! Plant in loose soil or raised beds, or stacked tires filled with soil. Water regularly until they flower, then gradually less as the plants decline. You can start poking around for potatoes anytime. Each start produces a couple of dozen potatoes of varying sizes.

Radicchio -- grown for salad greens.

Suggested varieties: Giulio

Spicy, peppery flavor is not for everyone (bleccchh!). Easy to grow in cool weather, from seed or starts. Very ornamental addition to winter color bowls.

Radish -- grown for roots, eaten raw.

Suggested varieties:

Champion, Plum Purple, Sparkler

Easy, quick--ready in as little as a month from seed. Pepperness (from mustard oil) increases in warmer weather. Daikon radish is a very large variety grown for use in Asian cooking. It is also very easy, but takes several weeks to develop. Plant Daikon in fall for best results.

Rutabaga -- grown for large root, eaten cooked or sometimes raw.

Need a long season; after July is too late. My kids loved these sliced raw when they were young. For some reason, college students think this name is very funny (see www.rutabaga.com). It is from the Swedish *rotabagge*; Scots call them 'neeps' or just turnips, and carve them into jack-o'-lanterns. They call the other turnips 'white turnips'. Americans call them 'yellow turnips' and call the other turnips 'turnips'.

Spinach -- grown for leafy greens.

Suggested varieties: Bloomsdale, Olympia, Tye

True spinach is grown in fall or early spring. Very easy, just plant seed or sprouts and harvest the outer leaves any time. New Zealand and Malabar spinaches are warm season plants grown as substitutes.

Turnip -- grown for roots, eaten cooked or occasionally raw.

Regular turnips take 10 - 12 weeks to form, so they need to be planted by early September for your Thanksgiving dinner! Shogoin is an Asian turnip which is very fast, easy, with a kind of peppery flavor and nice texture.