



October/November

University of California Cooperative Extension

**Welcome to Nutrition BEST Gardening!** At Nutrition BEST, we're working to make healthy food and healthy lifestyles available to everyone. In this newsletter, you will find projects, ideas, and resources for gardening with kids of all ages, even the very youngest. **Let's grow together!**

## Project of the Month: Indoor Blooms for Winter

Everyone loves spring flowers like tulips, hyacinths, and daffodils. Bring a bit of spring color indoors for the winter with this easy project! Spring bulbs need a period of cold winter temperatures to start growing. But you can “trick” them into blooming early with this simple method. This is a fun way for kids to watch a bulb sprout and grow up close, and the potted plants make beautiful holiday gifts — plant a few extra for teachers, friends, or family!

**1.** Purchase hardy flower bulbs at a nursery or garden center. Check that the bulbs are fresh and firm, not dry, shriveled, or soft. Hyacinths, paperwhites, and daffodils are all easy to grow indoors.



**2.** Fill a 6-inch flowerpot with an inch or two of moistened potting mix. Plant the bulbs with their pointed ends up, deep enough so that they are completely covered. (Hyacinths can also be grown in a jar or dish of water: fill the container with pebbles and rest the bulb on top, then add water just to touch the bottom of the bulb.) You can plant several bulbs in each container, of the same or different kinds.

**3.** Put the planted pots in a cold, dark place, such as a refrigerator or basement, for four to eight weeks. Check the bulbs occasionally to see if roots or shoots are starting to show, and keep the soil moist but not wet. Some bulbs can take several months to sprout, while paperwhites can grow in as little as three weeks.

**4.** When you see the bulbs starting to sprout, bring the pots indoors to a warmer place, like a kitchen counter. When the sprouts start to grow and turn green, set the containers on a sunny windowsill. The plants will grow fast — you can see them getting taller every day! Look for flower buds to appear, and enjoy watching your plants grow and bloom!

## Garden Fun: Build a Scarecrow!

Scarecrows have been used in gardens and on farms for thousands of years. In ancient Greece, Egypt, and Japan, people had the same problems with hungry birds eating their crops. So, they invented different kinds of “bird scarers” to frighten the birds away! You can make your own scarecrow out of materials you probably have around already.

For the head: you can use an old pillowcase, cloth bag, or large square of fabric. Stuff with straw or leaves to make a round head shape, and tie shut with string. Use buttons, paint, or felt to make a face for your scarecrow, and add an old hat if you have one.

For the body: Find a couple of long sticks, such as old broomsticks. Tie them together in a cross shape. The vertical stick will make the body, and the horizontal stick will be the arms. Attach the head to the top of the “body” stick. Dress your scarecrow in some old clothes, and stuff the clothes with straw or dry leaves. (Tie or pin the sleeves and openings shut so the stuffing doesn't come out!) Then set up your scarecrow in your garden to protect your harvest!



## Garden Checklist: October & November

It's time to clean up the garden: remove tomatoes, squash, and other summer garden plants as they stop producing. It's also important to pick up fallen or leftover fruit and leaves, and compost or dispose of them outside the garden — plant debris can harbor pests and plant diseases over the winter. A bit of garden clean-up now will pay off when it's time to plant next spring!

Continue planting cold-season crops until frost. Lettuce, carrots, radishes, kale, chard, and quick-growing crops can be planted from seeds. Broccoli, cauliflower, and other slower-growing plants will do best when planted from starts, and given plenty of time to get established before the weather gets cold.

You can extend the growing season by protecting your plants from frost and cold. Use lightweight fabric **row covers**, available at nurseries and home and garden centers, or build a **cold frame** using an old window or heavy clear plastic sheeting. (There are lots of plans available online; try a web search for "how to build cold frames.") You can even cut the bottom out of an empty milk or juice jug to make a mini greenhouse, just big enough to cover one plant! Teach kids to get creative and recycle materials you have on hand.



## Did You Know?

### Why do leaves turn color in the fall?

Plants make their own food using sunlight and a chemical called **chlorophyll**. Chlorophyll gives leaves their green color. In the fall and winter, the weather gets cold, there is less sunlight, and many plants stop making food. The days get shorter, and the chlorophyll goes away as the plants no longer need it. Then we can see yellow and orange colors in the leaves. These colors were there in the spring and summer, too, but they were covered up by the green chlorophyll. Red and purple colors also show up in some kinds of plants and trees, and are made as the cold weather affects glucose sugars trapped in the leaves — leftovers from the plant's food production.



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## Recipe: Roasted Butternut Squash

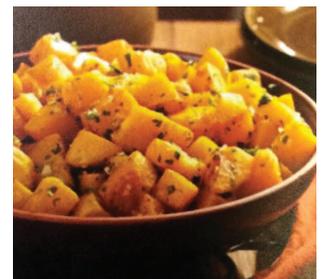
**Yield:** 4 servings    **Time:** 40 minutes

### Ingredients:

- 2 to 3 lbs (4 to 5 cups) winter squash, such as Butternut, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 cups apples or Asian pears, cored and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 tablespoon olive or vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 375°F. Toss squash with oil, salt, and pepper. Spread evenly on a baking sheet. Roast for 20-25 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add apples or pears and continue roasting until tender throughout and starting to brown, 10 to 20 more minutes. Taste, adjust seasonings, and serve warm or at room temperature.



**Nutrition BEST**  
 University of California Cooperative Extension  
 11477 E Avenue, Auburn, CA 95603  
 (530) 889-7350  
[ceplacer@ucdavis.edu](mailto:ceplacer@ucdavis.edu)  
[ucanr.edu/sites/Nutrition\\_BEST/Gardening](http://ucanr.edu/sites/Nutrition_BEST/Gardening)

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