

## Prep Veggie Gardens for Autumn Edibles

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, Sept. 4, 2018

**Q:** I just recently moved here and I am wondering if I can grow a year-round garden in Redding? Is it too late to get started this year?

**A:** Yes, you can grow vegetables year round in Redding as long as the plants have a little protection on the coldest days. During the summer we grow primarily vegetables that produce fruit, ears or pods that we eat. For the fall and winter garden think of planting vegetables for which we eat the leaves: Lettuce, Swiss chard, spinach and cabbage, the buds like broccoli and cauliflower, or the roots or bulbs like carrots, radishes, turnips and garlic. An exception to this are peas and fava beans where we eat the pod.

If started now, most vegetables will produce a fall crop and vegetables that will usually winter over here in Redding. These include most cole crops: Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale and green onions. It also includes hardy herbs like oregano, rosemary and chives.

August is the time to sow seeds indoors for vegetables such as cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and kale for transplanting out in the later part of September. Now is also the time to sow lettuce, carrots and radish directly into the garden. In early October, it will be time to plant such tasty garden additions as garlic, onions and peas.



Colorful cauliflower and broccoli can winter nicely in Redding. (Photo: Submitted)

When planting outside remember humidity is very low and with these continued hot temperatures, the top couple of inches of soil will continue to dry out very quickly until the rains set in. This drying out can kill seeds planted directly in the soil.

Anyone who has tried to grow crops like broccoli in the summer knows that the hot weather makes it inedible because it bolts, which means it flowers in preparation for producing seeds. That is also true for most of the other cool weather crops.

Once people experience this, they may think it's best to wait for the cool weather of October or November to plant. It may be surprising, but actually, to get off to a strong and vigorous start, most cool-season plants, whether grown from seed or from a transplant, need to be planted while the days are still long and the soil is still warm.

This means planting at a time when the starts will require consistent and frequent watering and some protection from the sun's rays in the hottest part of the day. Using coated seeds or planting in shallow trenches that can be covered with old boards until seeds sprout will help prevent drying out.

For most crops you will get a harvest before frost but many can winter over and give you a spring crop with some frost protection, such as staked gallon milk jugs, which you can cover with old towels or sheets.

Most years you'll have another opportunity to plant some of these same vegetables again in February or early March. Do remember that depending on your elevation, exposure to the sun, and the microclimate in your vegetable garden, you may find these plantings are a bit more unpredictable and the interval

between planting and harvest will generally be longer than for fall plantings because of cooler soil temperatures.

In addition, midwinter plantings can often present a challenge because soil is too wet to be cultivated. Some gardeners prepare their winter beds ahead of the rainy season to avoid this problem.

*The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email [mastergardener@shastacollege.edu](mailto:mastergardener@shastacollege.edu). The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.*