

## These Steps Will Get You The Fall Or Winter Garden You Want

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, Sept. 20, 2019

**Q:** What should I be doing to start a fall or winter garden?

**A:** This is a question I have been asked quite a bit over the past week or two. To get ready for planting either fall or spring it is best to work compost into your beds and make them as weed-free as possible. Adding some fish meal or other natural fertilizer before planting will help feed plants during the growing season.



Chives and their flowers are edible. (Photo: Getty Images/iStockphoto)

Before planting your fall garden, carefully go over your drip or spray watering system to see what needs to be repaired or replaced. As soon as the rains have begun and you can hopefully shut them off for a while, but many times we will have a long dry spell in January when you may need to water again.

You may also want to set up some type of frost protection such as hoops over your bed that you can quickly cover with frost cloth or an old blanket before a cold snap. It is much easier to do before you have plants in place.

For planting now, consider sugar snap peas. You may get a harvest before frost or they may winter over and give you a spring crop. Other vegetables you may want to consider planting are the cole crops — broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, etc., lettuce, green onions, and hardy spices like oregano and chives. All of these plant, with the exception of lettuce, over winter well and should produce into the spring season.



Fresh kale (Photo: 4nadia, Getty Images/iStockphoto)

This time of year when it is still hot and humidity is very low, the top couple of inches of soil will continue to dry out very quickly so seed starting outside can be a challenge.

Drying out during the germination process can kill seeds quickly. To avoid this when planting outdoors, plant seed in shallow trenches which you can cover with old boards or card board until seeds sprout. Remember to check often as you have to remove the cover as soon as the seedlings emerge. You may have better luck if you start your vegetables indoors from seed, and set the young plants out once they are ready to transplant.

If you are thinking about purchasing vegetable starts or adding some new trees or shrubs to your landscape, now until late October is the best time to plant. Don't forget the fall sales coming up at the McConnell Arboretum Oct. 5 and California Native Plant Society and Shasta College Plant Sale on Oct. 19. Wyntour Gardens also has a fall sale for shrubs and trees coming up the end of the month.

After prepping beds for planting, any beds that won't be used for your winter garden can be covered with layers of newspaper or card board held down with stones to keep weeds out until spring

planting. This will save you time and also allow compost and fertilizers to breakdown slowly so the soil is all ready for planting in the spring.

Don't forget to stop and enjoy the beauty of your efforts and this cooler weather after our hot summer.

*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.*