Planning your Fall
Vegetable Garden
Master Gardener Program of Santa Clara County

Key ideas
- In our Mediterranean climate, we can grow fresh vegetables year-round.
- Cool season gardening has many advantages.
- A wide variety of vegetables grow very well in our cool season.

1. Cool season gardening

Why garden year round?
- Mediterranean climate: warm, dry summer and cool, wet winter
- Efficient use of garden space
- Fresh vegetables year round
- Can avoid some pests/diseases

Advantages of cool season gardening
- Slow growth, long holding time, vegetables are “refrigerated” right in the ground
- Less work: fewer weeds & pests, not as much watering needed
- Some crops taste better after light frost (cabbage family: broccoli, cauliflower, kale)

Know where your sun is
- Shorter days, overcast, lower sun path
- More shade from buildings, less shade from deciduous trees
- Need full sun, at least 6 hours. Some greens (lettuce, spinach) can do with less

Watering
- Rain! Still need irrigation: getting seedlings started, periods of no/little rain
- Less needed because weather is cooler

Soil Preparation
- Santa Clara County’s clay soils are very fertile, but its small particle size means it compacts easily and drains too slowly for many vegetables
- To improve your soil texture, incorporate compost into the top 6-10” of soil: between 20%-33% by volume (2-3 inches of compost incorporated into 10” of soil)
- The only supplemental nutrient generally needed is nitrogen, which should be added to soil at planting and lightly every 3-4 weeks during the growing season
  - While compost contains nitrogen, the amount available varies greatly, so consider using additional forms of nitrogen such as alfalfa, fish meal or blood meal.

When to plant
- Get started early: late summer through early fall; or early spring
- Transplants allow you to plant later, giving summer crops more time to mature
- Starting seeds and seedlings
  - Soil temperature, germination
  - Starting outdoors: dappled shade, morning sun

A guideline calendar
- July/August: Start seeds in containers for cole crops
- August/September: Start seeds in containers for greens, beets, peas
- September/October
  - Transplant cole crops, greens, peas, beets
Seed peas, carrots and beets in place
Start onion seeds in containers

- October/November
  - Continue transplanting greens
  - Plant garlic and shallot bulbs
- November/December: Plant onion seedlings
- February/March: Can plant many vegetables again in spring, before summer crops

3. Cool season vegetables

Salad greens
- Lettuce – Butterhead, batavian, romaine, leaf, mixes
- Plant closely for cut & come again or 6-10" apart for heads
- Start in pots 4-6 weeks ahead of time or direct seed
- Will bolt and go to seed when weather becomes too warm or with age, gets bitter
- Pests: snails & slugs
  - Hand pick at night, especially first few weeks
  - Find hiding places: cool, damp, shaded. Set out boards, bricks, flowerpots
  - Use iron phosphate (e.g. Sluggo); don't overuse
- Pests: birds
  - Irregular holes in leaves, not just on edges
  - Protect seedlings with netting or row cover

Chard
- Start in pots 4-6 weeks ahead of time or direct seed 10-12" apart
- Pick outer leaves (pull rather than cut) and continue harvesting for months
- Pests: leafminers
  - Look for trails in leaves
  - Cut off and throw away (not compost) infected leaves
- Pests: aphids (mostly a problem in the spring)
  - Look for curled leaves, sticky surfaces, ants
  - Don't over-fertilize; aphids are attracted to tender growth
  - Wash off with sharp spray of water
  - Many beneficial insects (e.g., ladybug larvae) prey on aphids

Kale
- Start in pots 4-6 weeks ahead of time or direct seed 10-12" apart
- Pick outer leaves (pull rather than cut) and continue harvesting for months
- Favorite varieties: Red Russian, Lacinato
- Pests: aphids, see under chard, above

Asian greens: bok choy, tatsoi, etc.
- Start in pots 3 weeks ahead of time or direct seed 6-8" apart
- Pick outer leaves (pull rather than cut) or cut whole plants
- Very fast growing; plant several times a few weeks apart to have a continuous supply.

Peas
- English/shelling, sugar snap, snow peas (pea pods)
- Start in pots 3-4 weeks ahead of time or direct seed 3-4" apart
- Need trellis support, even short varieties. Run trellis north-south if possible
- Harvest shelling and sugar snaps when pods are full, but before they become lumpy and starchy. Harvest snow peas when full size but still flat
• Powdery mildew: For best results, plant peas in fall, not spring. Full sun
• Pests: slugs, snails, and birds nip off emerging seedlings

Broccoli
• Cabbage family (cole crops, brassicas)
• Start seeds in pots 4-6 weeks ahead, transplant in Sept-Oct, 12-24" apart
• Harvest main head when full but not spreading; harvest sideshoots for 2-3 more months
• Pests: Imported cabbageworm & cabbage looper
  o Same color as plant, often found along rib
  o Handpick, grow under row cover, encourage predators
• Pests: Bagrada Bug
  o Relatively new invasive species, 5-8mm, similar in appearance to harlequin bug
    but 1/3 the size, reproduces in cole crops
  o Report if you notice in your garden: Ag Commission or Master Gardeners

Other cabbage family plants
• Cauliflower: prima donnas, one-shots, needs 2-3 foot spacing
• Kohlrabi: delicious raw, leaves tasty too. Plant closely, 6” apart
• Brussels sprouts: Needs to start early, transplant in early August at latest

Root crops: beets, carrots, parsnips, radishes, turnips, rutabagas
• Grown mainly for their roots, some have edible greens
• Need loose soil that allows roots to penetrate easily and grow straight
• Can be harvested when needed, over weeks or months

References
• Pamela Geisel, *Vegetable Gardening Basics*, publication 8059, University of California Agriculture & Natural Resources, anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8059.pdf
• Dennis R. Pittenger, *California Master Gardener Handbook* (Oakland: Regents of the University of California, Agriculture & Natural Resources publication 3382, 2002)
• “UC IPM Online, Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program”, accessed April 2011, ipm.ucdavis.edu

Resources
• Master Gardener Hotline for gardening-related questions: 408-282-3105 or mastergardeners.org/ask-a-question: This is a free service for residents of Santa Clara County
• “Santa Clara County Warm & Cool Season Vegetable Planting Charts:” mastergardeners.org/warm-cool-veg-charts
• “The California GardenWeb”, Vegetable-specific Website accessed August 2014, cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/Vegetables/
• Editors, *Sunset Magazine*, *The New Sunset Western Garden Book* (Oxmoor House, 2013)