

Horticulture

Vegetable Gardening in the Fall

By planning and planting a fall vegetable garden it is possible to have fresh vegetables up to and even past the first frosts. Many varieties of vegetables can be planted in mid to late summer for fall harvests. Succession plantings of warm season crops, such as corn and beans, can be harvested until the first killing frost. Cool season crops, such as broccoli, beets, cabbage, cauliflower, kohlrabi, leaf lettuce, radishes, spinach, turnips, kale and collards grow well during the cool fall days and withstand light frosts. Timely planting is the key to a successful fall garden.

To determine the time to plant a particular vegetable for the latest harvest, you need to know the average date of the first hard freeze. For Lancaster County, it is approximately October 10th. You also must know the number of days to maturity for the variety of vegetable you plan to grow. Count the days back from the frost date to figure your planting date.

When planting fall crops, prepare the soil by restoring nutrients removed by spring and summer crops. A light layer of compost or a small

application of fertilizer will prepare the soil for another crop. Dry soil may make working the soil difficult and inhibit seed germination during the midsummer period. Plant fall vegetables when the soil is moist after a rain or water the area thoroughly the day before planting. It may also be beneficial to soak the seeds over night before planting.

An organic mulch will help keep the soil cool. Mulching between rows can decrease soil drying. Irrigate when necessary so plants have sufficient moisture during the warm days. Some of the best quality vegetables are produced during the warm days and cool nights of the fall season.

Look ahead to the fall garden, which offers its own satisfaction through its prolonged harvest of fresh vegetables, savings in food costs, and the knowledge that you are making full use of your gardening space and season. (MJF)



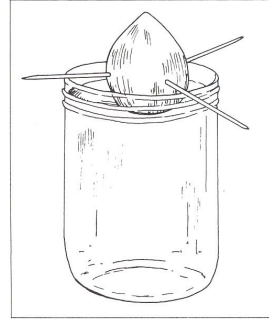
Avocado seeds may be started in a glass of water or in a moist, porous soil mixture. Either will work, but the soil method will provide faster results. If the seed is started in water, insert three or four toothpicks in the seed about half way down the sides. Next, fill a small glass with water to the brim and place the seed in the glass, flat end down, so the toothpicks rest firmly on the brim. The toothpicks should be supporting the seed so that the pointed half is out of the water and the bottom half is in the water. The sprouting tip will come out of the pointed end, so be sure the flat end is immersed in water. Place the glass on a sunny window sill or some other

well lighted spot. Add water as needed to keep the bottom half of the seed wet at all times.

After a few weeks, a small root should appear from the flat end, and there should be signs of a small shoot at the pointed end. Tiny leaves will develop and grow on this shoot. Later, when the main stem emerges, plant the seed in a container with house plant potting soil. If the avocado seed is started in soil, fill a large container with house plant potting soil. Plant the seed so that the pointed end is about an inch above the soil surface. Keep

the soil moist at all times until the avocado plant is established.

Water the plant often enough to keep the soil moist, but not wet. A wet soil will result in curled leaves and soft stems. A dry soil will cause dry leaves that eventually fall off. Avocado plants should be fertilized every three months with a standard houseplant fertilizer. Also, remember that avocado plants require good, indirect light.



Because avocado plants grow into trees, provide them with plenty of growing space. (MJF)

Blue Flowers for the Garden

Blue is a cool and calming color. Many gardeners look for plants that have



blue flowers to plant with other complementary colors, such as white, violet, grey, pink and yellow. Here are a few plants that will grow in Southeast Nebraska that have blue

flowers.

Virginia bluebells (Mertensia virginica) This woodland flower blooms in the spring. This perennial has nodding clusters of blue, bell shaped flowers. It grows best in shady areas of the garden. The plants grow from one to two feet tall and spread about a foot. They go dormant in summer, so I like them near hostas or other perennials that cover the space later. Virginia bluebells are cold hardy in USDA zones 3 to 9.

Blue corydalis (Corydalis flexuosa) This is a wonderful woodland plant that thrives in shade and moist soil, but also grows in full sun. The flowers bloom in neat clumps in mid to late spring. The plant has a lovely fernlike foliage. Blue corydalis is a perennial and hardy in USDA zones 5 to 8.

Heartleaf Brunnera (Brunnera macrophylla) This spring bloomer prefers moist,

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Viburnums in the Landscape

Viburnums are one of the most outstanding group of shrubs for use in the landscape planting. Among their characteristics are variation in size from two to thirty feet, varied growth habits, excellent foliage, striking and fragrant flowers, showy fruit, and interesting winter appearance.

In the landscape, viburnums are effective in many situations. The smaller forms such as Korean spice viburnum (Viburnum carlesii) and European cranberrybush viburnum (Viburnum opulus 'Compactum') are excellent for planting close to houses and the larger forms, such as

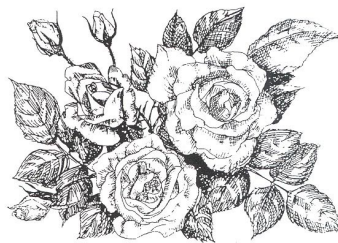
wayfaringtree viburnum (Viburnum lantana) and blackhaw viburnum (Viburnum prunifolium), provide good specimen and screen plantings.

The flowers, primarily white in color, are borne in clusters ranging from a rounded snowball shape to a flat form. The Korean spice viburnum is extremely fragrant.

In the fall, there is ornamental value in the shrubs berries. Of the red, fruiting types linden viburnum (Viburnum dilatatum), European cranberrybush viburnum (Viburnum opulus) and American cranberry viburnum (Viburnum trilobum), are among the best. Others like arrowwood

viburnum (Viburnum dentatum) and nannyberry viburnum (Viburnum lentago) have blue fruits attractive to the birds. Foliage of a viburnum is excellent and can have a velvety smooth leaf surface or a glossy, leathery appearance.

In addition to the aesthetic features, Viburnums are hardy, resistant to serious pests, adaptable to a variety of soil and environmental conditions, and require little pruning. They will grow in either sun or shade, however, flowering and fruiting will be more profuse in a sunny location. (MJF)



Foliage, as well as flowers, can provide a noticeable fragrance. Try to incorporate scented perennials into your landscape and enjoy the benefits all summer long. (MJF)

Add a Touch of Fragrance

When planning a perennial garden, most people are concerned with what color the flowers will be, the height, and if the plant will grow in sun or shade. One feature that is often overlooked is fragrance. A large collection of perennials have pleasing scents that consist of subtle, sweet perfume to zesty citrus, or spicy aromas.

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|---------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Allium | Dianthus | Lavender | Narcissus | Sweet Rocket |
| Artemisia | Evening Primrose | Lavender Cotton | Oregano | Sweet Violet |
| Bearded Iris | Feverfew | Lemon Balm | Peony | Sweet William |
| Bee Balm | Foxtail Lily | Lily | Phlox | Sweet Woodruff |
| Bergamot | Gasplant | Lily-of-the-Valley | Pinks | Thyme |
| Carnation | Honesty | Mallow | Primrose | Tulip |
| Chrysanthemum | Hosta | Meadow Sweet | Red Valerian | Yarrow |
| Cowslip | Hyacinth | Mint | Rose | |
| Daylily | Hyssop | Muscari | Sage | |

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