

# Autumn edibles: Tips for fall gardening and second plantings

(BPT) - People choose to garden for many reasons: Food is fresher and tastes better. It's a healthy hobby that exercises the body. It saves money. Numerous reports show an increasing number of homeowners are growing their own fruits, vegetables and herbs.

As summer's end nears, you may think gardening season is over. The good news is with a few strategic tips, you can keep your green thumb going and enjoy a plethora of autumn edibles for months to come. -

Step 1: Select second plantings

Second plantings are the plants you use for the latter part of the gardening season. Late summer is typically the best time to plant these varieties. Call your local extension offices or access information online to find regionalized planting schedules and recommended plant varieties.

The length of the fall season and when the first frost will likely hit are important considerations when selecting second plantings. Keep in mind that fast-maturing vegetables are ideal for fall gardening and they should be planted early enough to reach maturity before the first frost arrives.

Popular second plantings that yield a delicious late fall/early winter harvest include broccoli, lettuce, turnips, collards, carrots, peas, radish, spinach, leeks and beets. Some people even claim root vegetables and cole crops like kale and turnips taste better after the first frost.

Step 2: Prepare your garden space

If you plan to use your current garden space for second plantings, remove the early-season plants that are done producing. Add those plants to your current compost bin or create a new compost pile with easy-to-use, stylish options from Outdoor Essentials. Wood-slate bins blend well with the outdoor aesthetic and the design allows oxygen to circulate and facilitate the composting process.

Next, prepare your garden space. Elevated garden beds are growing in popularity because they look great anywhere in your yard or on your patio, and are easy to move if necessary. Raised garden beds from Outdoor Essentials elevate the plants so gardeners don't have to bend over and risk injury. They are ideal for fall because gardeners can regulate the temperature of raised beds with ease. On hot days, move or add a shade netting to protect plants from the heat; when frost is a threat, cover the entire bed for protection.

While you're getting your hands dirty, fall is the perfect time to plant



spring flowering bulbs. A little outdoor work now and you'll be rewarded with beautiful flowers when spring arrives next year.

Step 3: Enjoy the harvest

Tend your garden daily for the best results - it may just need a quick check for pests and proper soil moisture. Typical benefits of late-season gardening in-

clude fewer bothersome bugs and the soil has better water retention.

As plants grow, pick the fruits and vegetables and enjoy Mother Nature's bounty. If your plants become crowded, pluck a few out to help remaining plants grow roots and increase the harvest yield. You may be surprised just how many cool months your plants provide you

with fresh, delicious produce.

Fall is a great opportunity to keep gardening momentum alive. So get started and decide what second plantings are best for your space. In as little as 30 days you could be eating the freshest, most flavorful vegetables you've ever had, all while under the gorgeous autumn sun.



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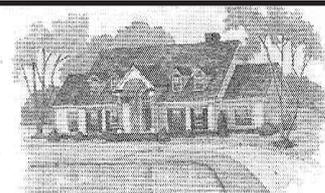
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