



Midsummer in the Garden - Succession Planting

Tomatoes ripen heavy on the vine and zucchini pokes out from under every leaf. But if you yearn for the tastes of sweet lettuce, plump carrots, and pungent radishes (long gone in the summer heat), you can start a new garden now. Late season vegetables are the garden's second act producing tasty harvests until frost draws the curtain on the growing season.

It's time to plant--again!

Starting in mid July, and extending through the middle of August, you can plant many of the crops that you did in the spring. Peas, beans, carrots, lettuce, and broccoli—all vegetables you enjoyed from your late spring garden—grow quickly in the hot summer sun, ripening just as the weather starts to cool down. In fact, many gardeners believe that frost improves the flavor of crops such as broccoli, kale, and cauliflower.

And if you had been really organized this spring you would have planned for a succession of harvests and would have re-planted many crops as often as every two weeks. But let's suppose that you haven't quite managed to be that organized. What can you plant now, the first week of August?

How to plant a second-harvest

Planting second-harvest seeds in the garden requires a little extra care to get them started. Here's how: 1. Speed up germination by soaking seeds in water overnight before planting. 2. Plant seeds in furrowed rows, cover with rich soil or compost, and water well (the furrows will help direct the water to the seeds, and help create a strong root system). 3. Water well and daily until the seedlings appear. Use a mulch to minimize evaporation. If drip irrigation is possible, use it. 4. Provide a sunscreen protection to your seedlings, such as row covers, that will help lower soil temperatures and shield the tender plants from the sun's intense rays. 5. Gradually remove the screened protection once the seedlings are established. 6. Cover tender crops in the evening when there is a danger of frost. Although some cool-weather crops, such as carrots and radishes can be sowed directly in the soil in hot temperatures, you'll have a better harvest if you wait until the scorching summer temperatures subside before you plant. Or, start longer season crops, such as cauliflower, broccoli and Brussels sprouts in another, more protected location, and transplant the seedlings into the garden later on.

Second-time around success

Second harvest plants ripen slowly in the cool late summer temperatures. Here are some tips for caring for seedlings:

- Keep an eye on weeds. Late-summer vegetables generally have less competition with weeds than their early-spring planted counterparts, but you should keep any new weed seeds from germinating and competing with your seedlings for moisture.
- Protect seedlings from the sun. Cover seedlings with row covers (late summer crops need protection from the sun, just as early-spring crops needed protection from the cold).

- Plant seedlings in the evening. To give your seedlings a fighting chance, plant them in the evening, so they can enjoy several hours of cool temperatures before experiencing a full day in the sun.
- Keep seedlings well watered. Hot summer sun can fry young plants that don't receive enough moisture.
- Watch for pests. Although there are less bugs midsummer, be sure to keep cabbage broccoli, and cauliflower sprayed with bT at 10-day intervals and after each rain.
- Replace what you took. After harvesting your second crop, make sure to replace the nutrients in the soil that two vegetable gardens used for the summer. Nourish the soil with a generous helping of compost.

What to plant in late summer

Here's a list of late-summer crops that will produce a second harvest at the end of the growing season. Select quick-growing, heat or cold-tolerant varieties (depending upon when and what you plant) that will sprint toward maturity, then hold up against early cold weather. Here are some suggestions, with the number of days after planting that they can be harvested:

Beets 'Big Red Hybrid' (55 days), 'Burpee's Golden' (55 days), and 'Ruby Queen' (55 days).

Broccoli 'Packman Hybrid' (60 days), 'Green Goliath' (55 days), and 'Green Comet Hybrid' (40 days).

Bush beans 'Astrel French Filet' (55 to 60 days), 'Derby Green' (55 days), 'Goldcrop Yellow Wax' (54 days), and 'Jade Green Pod' (56 days).

Cabbage 'Dynamo Hybrid', an All-America Selections winner, 'Early Golden Acre Year' (60 days), and 'Early Stonehead Hybrid' (65 days). Carrots: 'Babette' (57 days), 'Little Finger' (65 days), and 'Thumbelina' (60 days).

Cauliflower 'Snowball Self Blanching' (72 days), 'Snow King Hybrid' (60 days), and 'Snow Crown Hybrid' (60 days).

Kale 'Blue Curled Vates' (60 days)

Lettuce Bibb-type 'Buttercrunch' (68 days), and the looseleaves 'Red Sails' (43 days), 'Simpson Elite' (48 days), and 'Black Seeded Simpson' (45 days). Plant seeds every two weeks so you can enjoy the crop longer. The looseleaf types are "cut and come again"

Mustard Greens 'Early Mizuna' (begin harvesting within 14-21 days)

Peas 'Early Crop Maestro' (61 days), 'Early Crop Progress No. 9' (63 days), and 'Sugar Snap Edible Podded' (68 days). Peas really like cool weather so if it is an exceptionally hot summer, don't bother.

Pepper (or Garden) Cress 10 -12 days Edible flowers as well as leaves.

Radishes 'Sparkler' (25 days), 'Cherry Belle' (22 days), or 'Early Scarlet Globe' (23 days), and 'Easter Egg II Blend' (30 days).

Spinach 'Bloomsdale Long Standing' (45 days) and 'Olympia Hybrid' (42 days).

Brussels sprouts 'Jade Cross,' an All-America Selections winner (88 days).

New Zealand Spinach Very heat tolerant and bolt resistant. A good substitute for conventional spinach. 'Cut and come again'.

Swiss chard 'Rhubarb' (60 days) and 'Lucullus' (60 days).

Turnip There are many varieties, all quite quick growing. 'All Seasons' (28 days) and 'Early Italian White red Top'

SOURCE - Adapted from www.garden.excite.com