

The Time is Now

Fall and Winter Gardening for Sustainable Food Production

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If you live in bioregions with mild winter climates, or have greenhouses or sheltered beds, consider the importance of planting starts and seeds of foodplants during July, August and September for harvest during fall and winter.

Six families of plants make up the bulk of fall and winter crops.

1. Daisies-Asteraceae; Lettuce, Chicory, Edible Burdock (Gobo),
2. Chenopods-Chenopodiaceae; Spinach, Beets, Chard
3. Legumes-Fabaceae; Fava Beans, Peas,
4. Alliums- Alliaceae; Hard Stalk, Braiding, and Elephant Garlic, Leeks, Garlic Chives, Onions
5. Brassicas-Brassicaceae; Broccoli, Cabbage, Chinese Cabbage, Bok-Choy, Arugula, Mustards, Tat-soi, Mizuna, Kales, Cauliflowers, Turnips, Rutabaga, Garden Cress, Radish, Daikon
6. Apiiums-Apiaceae; Celery, Carrots, Parsnips, Cilantro, Parsley, Fennel, Alexander's Salad Greens, Parsnips, Angelica

Some of these are direct seeded, others planted in flats and transplanted from starts. Interplanting the summer garden with Napa Chinese Cabbage for making kim-chi 2-3 months after sowing and with Romanesco Broccoli for fall and winter use are common practices in our sustainable food growing system. Ohkura Winter Queen Daikon Radish is another of our fall planted favorites. Food in the ground is a realistic alternative to frozen, dried or pre-packaged foods.

An invaluable aspect of overwintering brassicas and umbels is the production of seed crops in the following spring and summer. Seed saving of your favorite, adapted varieties becomes essential in this era of genetic engineering and from the loss of locally adapted varieties. Bioregionally specific foodplants have been developed by previous generations of gardeners, public domain plant breeding and native peoples who survived and selected nutritionally and culturally improved kinds.

Fall planted fava beans overwinter, especially before they flower, and give early spring food. The leaves are edible as are the beans and immature pods. They improve the soil and have beautiful flowers visited by local pollinators.

Good greens during January-March are provided by Alexander's Salad Greens which are best fall planted and which thrive during the cool, wet weather of the Pacific Northwest (PNW).

Direct seeding onions during the fall provides scallions (bunching onions) and some overwinter giving bulbs early during the following spring.

During fall and winter, we like to eat cooked kales. They are beautiful in the garden, delicious when steamed and of prime worthwhile nutrition for our bodies. There

are many varieties worth growing such as Red Russian, True Siberian, Oregreen Curled and Steel Green. In the PNW, the climate favors luxuriant growth and sustainable food from these plants and their close relatives.

The essence of organic is local, hands in the soil, vigorous, adapted and widely distributed.

Complete the cycle, save seeds.