

Is it too late to start my fall vegetable garden? â€” D.T. Itâ€™s probably too late to start some crops from seed, but there are still a lot of vegetables you can plant, grow and harvest before winter arrives. And there are some that you can grow through the winter. Letâ€™s talk about some of these.

Fall vegetable gardens are my favorite. Yes, I like to get out in the spring to get things growing, but then summer sets in and letâ€™s admit it: Taking care of the vegetable garden can get tiresome in the heat. But in contrast, it can be downright joyful watering and even weeding as the temperatures cool down in the fall. Plus, you get a couple of added bonuses from a fall garden: You wonâ€™t have as many pest problems, and vegetables grown in the fall just seem to taste better. Now is a great time to start a variety of crops such as cabbage, collards, kale, kohlrabi, mustard, peas, radish, rutabaga, spinach, Swiss chard and turnips. As long as the weather cooperates, you should be able to get a good harvest later this year. The vegetables mentioned above are what we call semi-hardy vegetables, meaning they can typically survive a few light frosts before giving it up to winter. Many of the semi-hardy vegetables can be started from seed in your garden now that the soil temperatures are cooling down. When I last checked the Oklahoma Mesonet ([mesonet.org](http://mesonet.org)), average 2-inch soil temperatures were in the mid to high 70s. This is a good germination temperature range. I started my Swiss chard a couple of weeks ago when it was a bit warmer, but I started the seeds in a planter box that I was able to move to a shady area so the soil wouldnâ€™t be too hot to germinate. They are about 3 inches tall now. But, if this weather holds, you should be good directly seeding your crops in the ground. You can also plant garlic, leeks, and onions, which are considered winter-hardy for a harvest next year. Leeks and onions need to be planted soon, but you have until around mid-October to plant garlic, which

gives you some time to select some good garlic to plant. One thing about growing garlic is that you get to anticipate your harvest all winter. Plus, who doesn't love garlic? The smell of garlic in the kitchen just seems to make everything better, and we could all use a large dose of that. If you are new to gardening or a seasoned pro, garlic is pretty simple to grow.

The first thing you need to do is to determine which variety of garlic you want to plant. There are quite a few varieties of garlic to choose from. OSU recommends German Red, Spanish Roja, Inchelium Red and Silver Skin. These can all be ordered from a variety of online suppliers if you can't find them locally. Once you get your garlic bulbs, it's time to plant. Garlic isn't too picky, but it will do best if planted in a location that receives full sun and in soil with good drainage. A good sandy loam would be perfect since it easily allows the bulbs to expand as they grow. Before planting, work a little organic, nitrogen-rich fertilizer into the soil such as blood meal. Garlic grows from the individual cloves that make up the garlic bulb. For best results, select the largest outside cloves for planting. Plant the cloves about 2 inches deep with the pointy tip up. You should allow 4–6 inches between cloves for good bulb growth. Some vegetables such as cucumbers or melons are space hogs in the garden. But garlic takes up very little space. Because of that, you can get a decent harvest from a small area. After planting, a healthy layer of mulch, such as straw, leaves or dry grass clippings, will help maintain soil temperatures and control weeds. During the fall growing season, garlic will produce some small shoots above ground. However, most of the action will be underground as it develops a root system.

Bulbs go somewhat dormant during the winter as they prepare for a spring growth spurt. During this growth period, additional watering may be needed if rainfall is not sufficient. In late June or early July, you will notice the leaves of your

garlic start turning yellow brown. This means it's time to harvest. To harvest, gently dig bulbs from the ground. Your garlic bulbs will need to be "cured" in a dry shaded area for 4-6 weeks. After they are dry, carefully remove the stalks leaving the outer skin intact. Properly stored garlic can last up to several months. See you in the garden. You can get answers to all your gardening questions by calling the Tulsa Master Gardeners Help Line at 918-746-3701, dropping by our Diagnostic Center at 4116 E. 15th St., or by emailing us at [mg@tulsamastergardeners.org](mailto:mg@tulsamastergardeners.org).