

PLANNING FOR THE FALL HARVEST

Maritta Perry Grau, Frederick County Master Gardener

Yes, it's summer, the pool beckons, books and hammocks send their siren song of kick back and relax, air conditioning feels so good, and still the garden keeps us busy. But even as we pull weeds, divide perennials, cut back chrysanthemums until mid-July, doggedly dig up invasives, and prepare for planting vegetables for fall harvest, we just have to pause and appreciate Mother Nature's handiwork this summer.

Whether I look east or west, north or south, the gardens surrounding our house and those of many of our neighbors have never looked better than this year, often making me wish I had the skill with a paintbrush and canvas that my sister-in-law, Rita, has.

In the east, early morning sun touches the tips of the white pine and Norway spruce, making them almost luminous. The deep shadows of cherry laurels and junipers stretching across the east side of our yard gradually disappear as the sun rises higher. More subdued, the Ostrich ferns in a wooded area—our “secret” garden, as my friend Ann calls that area—fill the understory with shades of pale green. By mid-afternoon the hot sun paints the lacy, feathery branches of arborvitae on our west border a brilliant green. In northern and other shady sections of the yard, caladium leaves with delicate pink veining are enormous; impatiens and begonias brighten the darkness. Petunias are full and lush everywhere we have full sun.

I'm not quite sure whom or what to thank for Mother Nature's generous, loving touch this year. Is the growth of plants due to all the rain we've had the past few weeks? Or are my husband and I being more attentive to our gardening tasks because of the pandemic? After all, we've sharply curtailed shopping, avoid eating out, cancelled a June vacation and many of the one-day or weekend trips we normally take to attend summer festivals. As my husband, who has a dominant wanderlust gene, remarked the other day, “What else is there to do but garden?”

Whatever the reason, it's a joy to see so much growth and bloom. And it makes me look forward to the plants yet to come—Will the seeds and seedlings planted in the next two months grow as lushly for a fall bounty of vegetables and salad greens?

Even if you don't do a lot of gardening, you might consider planting a few seeds now to harvest in early fall. It might be a solace to know no one has handled those vegetables but you when it comes time to harvest your crops and feed your family, or freeze/can for winter meals.

Admittedly, one drawback to spring and fall harvests is that you have to take into account the expected heavy frost dates, as well as the number of days between planting and harvesting, since varieties differ even within the same kind of plant. May 15/October 15 are traditional dates for frost, but check the weather stations for more targeted dates. Count back from the predicted frost date to determine just when to plant seeds for harvesting; most seed packets will tell you the number of days from planting to harvesting.

For example, most tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants require about 100 days to harvest. So, using October 15 as a harvest date, you would need to get those plants in as soon as possible. In the next week or two, you'll want to directly sow into the ground, hot weather veggies, such as cowpeas, corn, pumpkin, watermelon, gourds, and sunflowers. You can sow squash, beans, and cucumbers directly into your vegetable garden right now through the end of July. By the end of July, sow other fall vegetables, such as broccoli, kale, turnips, and cauliflower, in flats now or directly in the garden by August 20. Peas should be sown directly into the garden by August 15.

The National Gardening Association

(<https://garden.org/apps/calendar/?q=Dalecarlia+Rsvr%2C+MD>) suggests that because of the heat in July and August, you should start lettuce, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage indoors in trays in early July and transfer them to the garden in mid-August. The NGA posts a fall frost date of October 29, just about two weeks later than tradition.

Plant now for fall harvest

Below are suggested guidelines for planting seeds/seedlings to harvest this fall. Check with your local weather forecasters for best guesses as to the first heavy frost in our area. Our thanks to the National Gardening Association (<https://garden.org/apps/calendar/?q=Dalecarlia+Rsvr%2C+MD>) for the following information. Check its website for a more complete list of vegetable planting dates.]

Crop	Sow seeds indoors	Transplant seedlings into the garden	Direct-sow seeds
Beans	n/a	n/a	July 16–Aug 15
Beets	n/a	n/a	Aug 15–Sept 29
Broccoli	June 4–July 19	July 16–Aug 30	n/a
Brussel Sprouts	June 4–July 19	July 16–Aug 30	n/a
Cabbage	June 4–July 19	July 16–Aug 30	n/a
Cantaloupe	n/a	n/a	July 1–July 16
Carrots	n/a	n/a	July 31–Sept 29
Cauliflower	June 4–July 19	July 16–Aug 30	n/a
Chard	n/a	n/a	July 16–Sept 29
Collards	July 1–Aug 15	July 31–Sept 14	n/a
Corn	n/a	n/a	July 16–July 31
Cucumbers	n/a	n/a	July 16–July 31
Eggplants	May 20–June 4	July 1–July 16	n/a

Crop	Sow seeds indoors	Transplant seedlings into the garden	Direct-sow seeds
<u>Garlic</u>	n/a	n/a	Aug 15–Sept 29
<u>Gourds, Squash and Pumpkins</u>	n/a	n/a	Jun 16 - Jul 16
<u>Kale</u>	June 4–July 19	July 16–Aug 30	n/a
<u>Kohlrabi</u>	Jun 4–July 19	July 16–Aug 30	n/a
<u>Lettuce</u>	Julye 31–Aug 30	Aug 30–Sept 29	Aug 30–Sept 29
<u>Mustard</u>	n/a	n/a	Aug 30–Sept 29
<u>Okra</u>	n/a	n/a	June 16–July 16
<u>Onions</u>	n/a	n/a	Sept 29–Oct 9
<u>Parsley</u>	June 16–July 31	July 31–Sept 14	n/a
<u>Peas (English)</u>	n/a	n/a	July 31–Aug 30
<u>Peas (Southern)</u>	n/a	n/a	June 16–July 16
<u>Peas (Sugar Snap)</u>	n/a	n/a	July 31–Aug 30
<u>Peppers</u>	May 25–June 9	Jul 6–July 21	n/a
<u>Potatoes</u>	n/a	n/a	July 31–Aug 30
<u>Radishes</u>	n/a	n/a	Aug 30–Sept 29
<u>Spinach</u>	July 16–Aug 30	Aug 15–Sept 29	Aug 15–Sept 29
<u>Tomatoes</u>	May 25–June 9	July 6–July 21	n/a
<u>Turnips</u>	n/a	n/a	Sept 14–Oct 14
<u>Watermelon</u>	n/a	n/a	June 16–July 16

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Blue, White & Red

This pot sits on a hot pool deck next to a brick wall. They usually get watered every other day, but this spring and early summer, between copious rainfall and bountiful sunshine, Mother Nature has supplied most of the water needed. Profusely blooming and already spilling over their pot despite their hot location, are Tritunia blue-veined petunias, a white Calliope geranium, and dark pink petunias.

Photo Courtesy- Maritta Perry Grau

Coleus & Sweet Potato Vine

This pot sits in the shade, but a brick patio in front and brick wall behind still generate a lot of heat. The frequent and heavy rains have helped the plants explode with growth. From top are dark red-purple coleus; chartreuse coleus shot with red-purple splotches; and Ipomea Marguerite purple sweet potato vine.

Photo Courtesy- Maritta Perry Grau





Salmon Verbena & Petunias

Salmon-colored creeping verbena and Dreams Sky Blue petunias, actually so dark they look like midnight blue velvet, alternate along a narrow garden. The spring and summer rains and bright sunshine have helped all of these plants to grow more quickly than they usually do in our little piece of Eden.

Photo Courtesy- Maritta Perry Grau



Caladium & Begonia

This pot gets only a little sun but lots of shade. With all the rain we've had, the Summer Breeze caladium, its leaves white edged with green and finely threaded with dark pink and green veins, has grown much larger than expected and has begun to overbalance the angel-wing begonia.

Photo Courtesy- Maritta Perry Grau

For more information about the Frederick County Master Gardener/Horticulture Program, visit: <http://extension.umd.edu/frederick-county/home-gardening> or call Susan Trice at the University of Maryland Extension Frederick County office, 301-600-1596.

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