



Jill Ragan

Timing Your Winter Plantings

Hey, Friends & Welcome to the Winter Gardening Challenge. Tonight I am excited to talk with you all about growing food for your family year-round, knowing when to time your crops & also how to set yourself up for a successful winter growing season!

Let's Dive In



Winter

Gardening

Challenge

The Importance of Year-Round Food Production

Access to Fresh & Nutritious Food

Growing food year-round allows you to have a constant supply of fresh, homegrown produce. Imagine harvesting fresh broccoli or crisp lettuce straight from your garden in the middle of winter. It not only provides superior taste and nutrition but also reduces reliance on store-bought produce that may have traveled long distances.

Cost Saving

By growing food year-round, you can significantly reduce your grocery expenses. The cost of buying fresh produce can add up, especially during the off-season when prices tend to be higher. Cultivating your own fruits, vegetables, and herbs saves money and allows you to stretch your budget further.

Food Quality & Safety

When you grow food in your own garden, you have full control over the growing conditions and can avoid using harmful pesticides or synthetic fertilizers. You can prioritize organic and sustainable practices, ensuring that the food you consume is of the highest quality and free from potentially harmful chemicals.

Environmental Benefits

Year-round gardening promotes environmental sustainability. By reducing the need for long-distance transportation, refrigeration, and packaging, you contribute to lower carbon emissions and a smaller ecological footprint. Additionally, growing your own food encourages biodiversity and supports local ecosystems.



Grow Food

With Intention

Breaking the Seasonal Barrier



As a busy mom, grower, and business owner I understand how easy it is to believe that growing food is only feasible during the summer months, but it's time to debunk the misconception that growing food can only be limited to the summer season.

When we embrace the idea of growing food through all the seasons, we start to tap into a world of possibilities. The way to be successful with this is to make it work for YOU. Incorporate it into your schedule and set yourself up for success. How do we make this work?

Start Small, Grow Big

Begin with a modest garden or even a few containers on your patio. By starting small, you can gradually expand your gardening efforts as you become more comfortable and confident.

Embrace Efficiency

Time is a precious resource, and we want to make the most of it. With efficient gardening practices such as succession planting, vertical gardening, and utilizing space-saving techniques, we can maximize our yield while minimizing the time and effort required.

Involve the Whole Family

Gardening can be a wonderful opportunity to involve your children, partner, or loved ones. It becomes a shared experience, teaching valuable life skills, fostering a deeper connection with nature, and creating beautiful memories together.

The common misconception of limiting food production to the summer season stems from the traditional belief that gardening and farming are only possible during warmer months when the weather is favorable and the growing conditions are optimal. This misconception is often fueled by the idea that winter is a dormant period for plant life, and attempting to grow food during colder months is impractical or impossible.

However, this limiting belief couldn't be further from the truth. With advancements in gardening techniques, tools, and technology, along with a deeper understanding of plant biology and seasonal adaptations, year-round food production has become not only possible but also highly feasible for home gardeners

Many plants have evolved to withstand colder temperatures and can thrive in specific regions even during winter.

Advancements in season extension techniques, such as cold frames, row covers, and indoor gardening, enable us to create microclimates that protect plants from frost and cold weather, extending the growing season well beyond summer.

By embracing these innovative approaches and understanding the diverse array of cold-hardy crops, we can break free from the limitations imposed by seasonal misconception. Year-round food production opens up a world of possibilities, allowing us to enjoy fresh, homegrown produce throughout the year, irrespective of the weather or time of year.

Shifting our mindset away from the seasonal barrier empowers us to take charge of our food security, reduce reliance on external food sources, and create a more sustainable and self-sufficient lifestyle. It's time to challenge the misconception and explore the exciting world of year-round gardening, where fresh and nutritious food is always within reach, no matter the season



Knowing How To Time Your Winter Crops

Maximizing Growing Days

As the days get shorter and temperatures drop, the window for plant growth becomes limited. The timing of crop sowing and transplanting becomes crucial to maximize the number of growing days available during the fall and winter. By planting at the right time, we ensure that our crops have ample time to establish themselves and reach maturity before the harsh winter conditions set in.



Optimizing Crop Selection

Different crops have varying tolerance levels to cold temperatures. Understanding the optimal timing for each crop allows us to choose varieties that can withstand the cold and thrive during the fall and winter months. Proper timing also helps us avoid planting crops that may be more susceptible to frost damage or stunted growth due to unfavorable conditions.



Balancing Growth & Harvest

Timing is about finding the delicate balance between allowing plants to grow to their full potential and harvesting them before extreme cold or frost can damage the produce. Harvesting at the right time ensures that we get the best flavor, nutritional value, and storage life from our winter crops.



Preventing Winter Crop Failure

Planting too late in the season may lead to underdeveloped plants that won't survive the winter, resulting in crop failure. On the other hand, planting too early could expose young seedlings to harsh weather conditions before they are strong enough to handle it. Proper timing minimizes the risk of crop loss and increases the likelihood of a successful winter garden.

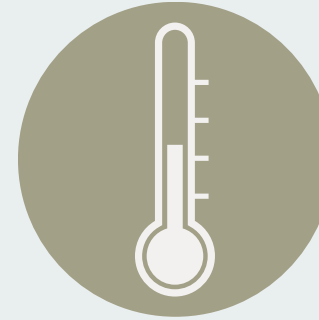


Utilizing Season Extension

To truly harness the potential of fall/winter growing, we often utilize season extension techniques such as cold frames, row covers, and hoop tunnels. Timing is critical when implementing these methods to ensure that our crops receive the protection they need at the right stages of growth.

A close-up photograph of a hand wearing a dark red, textured knit sleeve holding a freshly pulled carrot. The carrot is orange with some soil on its base and has green leafy tops. The background is a blurred garden with other green plants.

Why does plant growth slow down in the winter?



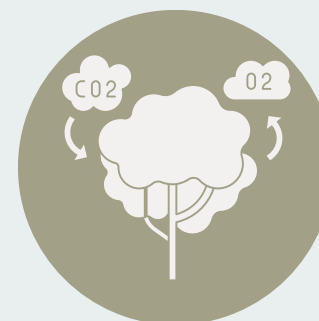
Temperature

Cold temperatures are the primary reason for the slowdown in plant growth during winter. Most plants are adapted to thrive in specific temperature ranges, and when the temperature drops significantly, their biological processes start to slow down. This decrease in metabolic activity affects the overall growth of the plant.



Daylight Duration

In winter, we experience shorter days and longer nights. Plants are incredibly sensitive to the length of daylight they receive, and this triggers various physiological responses. With less sunlight available, plants go into a semi-dormant state, focusing their energy on essential survival functions rather than vigorous growth.



Reduced Photosynthesis

Photosynthesis, the process by which plants convert sunlight into energy, is vital for growth. During winter, the decreased sunlight and lower temperatures result in reduced photosynthesis. As a result, plants produce less energy to fuel their growth and development.

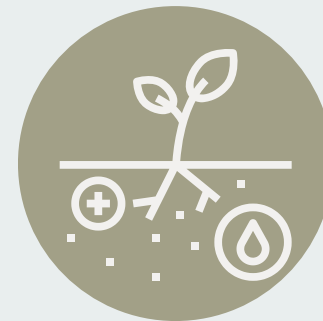


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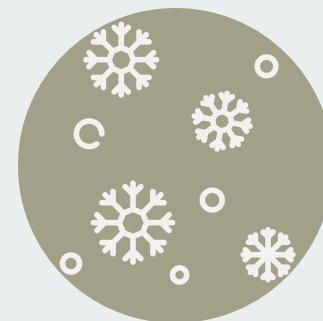
Water Availability

In some regions, winter brings colder and drier conditions. This reduced water availability can also slow down plant growth. Plants need a consistent supply of water to transport nutrients. When water is scarce, their growth can be stunted.



Nutrient Uptake

Cold temperatures can affect the uptake of essential nutrients from the soil. As the soil temperature drops, the microbial activity that helps release nutrients for plant absorption also slows down. This can lead to nutrient deficiencies, further contributing to reduced growth.



Frost Damage

In areas with freezing temperatures, frost can be a significant threat to plant growth. Frost can damage plant tissues, inhibiting their ability to function properly and causing growth setbacks.

So, all in all, plant growth slows down in winter as a survival mechanism. Plants redirect their energy to withstand the harsh conditions, conserve resources, and protect themselves until more favorable growing conditions return with the arrival of spring.

Understanding these natural processes helps us adapt our gardening practices and provide the necessary care to support our plants during the winter months.

I do think It's super Important to know these things because then you can set yourself up for success. Its like amending a garden bed before you know what Its deficient In, that would be a waste of time and resources.

Now that you know how plants operate In the winter, and the essentials we need to provide them with, we can move Into knowing what to plant our winter gardens.





Knowing When To Start

Planning when to start plants for a fall and winter garden requires a bit of foresight and understanding of your specific climate and growing zone. But don't worry; with a little guidance and the help of useful tools like the "Seedtime" app, you'll become a pro at timing your plantings!

Here's how you can figure out when to start your plants for a fall and winter garden

Know Your Average First Frost Date

The first step is to find out the average date of the first frost in your area. The first frost marks the end of the growing season, and it's essential to work backward from this date to determine when to start planting.

Calculate Days to Maturity

Next, you'll need to know the "days to maturity" for the crops you want to grow. This refers to the number of days it takes for a specific plant to reach harvestable size from the time it's planted. You can find this information on seed packets.

Count Backwards from the First Frost Date

Once you have the "days to maturity," count backward from the first frost date to determine when to sow your seeds or transplant seedlings. Ideally, you want your plants to reach maturity just before the first frost to ensure a plentiful harvest.

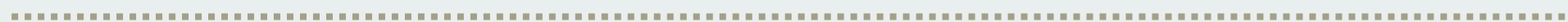


Knowing When To Start

Now, let's talk about the "Seedtime" app. This fantastic tool can streamline the process of planning your fall and winter garden. With "Seedtime," you can input your location and receive customized planting schedules tailored to your specific growing zone. The app takes into account your average first frost date and calculates the ideal planting dates for each crop based on their days to maturity.

It also provides useful reminders and alerts, ensuring you never miss a crucial planting window. It takes the guesswork out of when to start your plants, allowing you to focus on enjoying the gardening process and anticipating a thriving fall and winter garden.

So, by combining your knowledge of average first frost dates, days to maturity, and the assistance of the "Seedtime", you'll be well-equipped to time your plantings perfectly for a successful fall and winter garden.



My Planting Calendar

[illegible]

My Planting Calendar

Celery

- Celery - 1 - Tango

Cucumber

- Cucumber - 1 - Katrina

Green Beans - Bush

- Green Beans - Bush - 1 - ...

Kohlrabi

- Kohlrabi - 1 - Kossak
- Kohlrabi - 2 - Kossak

Lettuce

- Lettuce - 7 - Salanova Fo...
- Lettuce - 8 - Salanova Fo...
- Lettuce - 9 - Salanova Fo...

Potatoes

- Potatoes - 1 - Gold Rush

Radishes

- Radishes - 1 - KN Bravo
- Radishes - 2 - KN Bravo
- Radishes - 3 - KN Bravo

Spinach

- Spinach - 1 - Giant Winter
- Spinach - 2 - Auroch
- Spinach - 3 - Giant Winter
- Spinach - 4 - Auroch

Greenhouse Production

Today< > July 2023

12 months

Task FilterYearCust

	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	
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	🕒 Harvesting Tomatoes (D) - 1 - Grand Marshall																																			
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	🌱 Cultivating Brussels S...							🌱 Cultivating Brussels Sprouts - 1 - ...							🌱 Cultivating Brussels Sprouts - 2 - ...							🌱 Cultivating Beets - 2 - Bull's Blood							🌱 Cultivating Lettuce - ...							
	🌱 Cultivating Carrots - ...							🌱 Cultivating Cabbage - 1 - Tiara - ...							🌱 Cultivating Cabbage - 2 - Tiara - ...							🌱 Cultivating Carrots - 5 - Bolero - ...							🌱 Direct Seed Spinach ...							
	🌱 Cultivating Cauliflowe...							🌱 Cultivating Potatoes - 1 - Gold R...							🌱 Cultivating Carrots - 3 - Bolero - ...							🌱 Cultivating Radishes - 1 - KN Bravo							🌱 Transplanting Kohlrab...							
	🌱 Cultivating Celery - 1...							🌱 Cultivating Radishes - 1 - KN Bravo							🌱 Cultivating Carrots - 4 - Bolero - ...							🌱 Cultivating Radishes - 2 - KN Bravo							🌱 Transplanting Lettuce...							
	🌱 Cultivating Green Bea...							🌱 Cultivating Spinach - 1 - Giant Wi...							🌱 Cultivating Cauliflower - 1 - Purpl...							🌱 Cultivating Spinach - 3 - Giant Wi...							🕒 Harvestin...							
	🌱 Direct Seed Beets - 2...														🌱 Direct Seed Radishes - 3 - KN Br...							🕒 Harvesting Spinach - 1 - Giant Winter														
	🌱 Direct Seed Carrots - ...														🌱 Seeding Kohlrabi - 2 - Kossak							🕒 Harvesting Spinach - 2 - Auroch														
	🌱 Direct Seed Radishes...														🌱 Seeding Lettuce - 9 - Salanova F...							🕒 Harvesting Cauliflower - 2 - Early...														
	🌱 Direct Seed Spinach ...														🌱 Transplanting Lettuce - 7 - Salan...							🕒 Harvesting Celery - 1 - Tango														
	🌱 Direct Seed Spinach ...																					🕒 Harvesting Potatoes - 1 - Gold Rush														
	🌱 Seeding Lettuce - 8 - ...																					🕒 Harvesting Green Beans - Bush - 1 - Provider														
	🌱 Transplanting Broccol...																					🕒 Harvesting Cauliflower - 1 - ...														
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	🕒 Harvesting Carrots - 3 - Bolero - Left Beds																																			
	🕒 Harvesting Spinach - 2 - Auroch																																			
	🕒 Harvesting Kohlrabi - 1 - Kossak																																			
	🕒 Harvesting Spinach - 1 - Giant Winter																																			
	🕒 Harvesting Potatoes - 1 - Gold Rush																																			
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Understanding Succession Planting

Succession planting is a brilliant gardening technique that plays a vital role in achieving a continuous harvest throughout the year. This is a future webinar session, so make sure you tune in to learn all about how to utilize this tool for an exceptional gardening season.

But for now, let's touch on the basics of succession planting. This method involves planting crops in intervals, staggering the sowings or transplants to ensure a continuous and abundant yield. As you harvest one batch of crops, you'll have another batch that's already growing and nearing maturity. It's like having a well-orchestrated dance of planting and harvesting that keeps your garden productive all year long.



The Advantages of Succession Planting are ...

Maximizing Gardening Space

Minimizing Waste

Managing Crop Timing

Extending Harvest Periods

As a small scale farmer this has been crucial to our success and also was large way in how we are able to grow food year round for our family.



Some examples of how we've made this work for us is by...

Selecting Winter Hardy Varieties

One of the key tips I highlight in my book is the importance of choosing winter-hardy plant varieties. These varieties have been specifically bred or selected to withstand colder temperatures and adverse weather conditions. Examples include "Winterbor" kale, "Arctic King" lettuce, and "Winter Density" romaine. By focusing on these resilient varieties, you ensure a successful winter harvest.

Grow Within the Appropriate Seasons

The key here is to grow things in the winter that are intended to be grown in the winter, you won't see me trying to crank out tomatoes, or pepper in wintertime although, with a heat source, I've seen it done before, but for me, I want to limit my inputs and have bountiful outputs, I do this primarily by growing winter loving crops in the cooler months, and save the heat loving varieties for the summer. When you do this you are setting yourself up for success.



I know so many people who don't grow food throughout the fall and winter because they don't think they have the resources or funds available to build infrastructure to be successful. I encourage you guys to tune into all the webinars because many of these topics will be touched on, but you do not need high tunnels and heat sources to be able to grow food in the winter. You can implement cold frames or row covers and choose the suitable varieties and see much success in your gardens this winter.

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Adapting to Your Region: What Will Grow In Your Area?

Winter Hardy Plant Selection

Adapting to your region means carefully selecting winter-hardy plant varieties that can withstand colder temperatures, frost, and shorter daylight hours. These resilient plants have evolved to thrive in your specific winter climate, ensuring they can endure the challenges of the season.



Optimizing Sunlight Exposure

During winter, sunlight hours are limited, and the angle of the sun is lower in the sky. Adapting to your region's winter conditions allows you to position your garden beds, containers, or cold frames strategically to optimize sunlight exposure. Placing your winter crops in areas that receive the most sunlight helps them grow healthier and more robust.



Choosing Frost Tolerant Crops

Regions with frequent frost or freezing temperatures demand selecting crops that can handle these conditions without damage. By adapting your plant choices to frost-tolerant varieties, you can protect your garden from unexpected frosts and ensure a successful winter harvest.



Water Management

Adapting to your region's winter conditions involves understanding how to manage water effectively. In some areas, winter rainfall might be sufficient for your crops, while in others, you might need to provide additional irrigation during dry spells or for crops in containers.



When it comes to winter gardening, identifying suitable crops for your region requires specific considerations to ensure successful growth during the cold season.



Know your Hardiness Zone

Understand your region's winter hardiness zone, which indicates the lowest temperatures your area typically experiences. Winter hardiness zones help you choose crops that can withstand cold temperatures and frost.



Select The Right Varieties

Focus on winter-hardy plant varieties that are specifically bred or selected to withstand colder temperatures. Look for crops like cold-tolerant lettuces, hardy kale, winter spinach, and certain varieties of carrots and beets. These plants can thrive in the chilly conditions of your winter garden.



Explore Overwintering Crops

Some crops have the ability to grow through the winter and produce yields in early spring. These are known as overwintering crops. Examples include winter-hardy onions, garlic, and certain types of broccoli and cauliflower.



If you are unaware of your growing zone or frost dates a simple Google search will help, or you can plug in your zip code in seedtime, and will calculate it all for you as well. But if you want to have a successful winter garden, it takes knowing a few key principles and in my opinion not overwhelming yourself. Trust me I understand how easy it can be to “go all in” I’ve been there and done that more times than I care to admit, but if you are new to winter growing, it is different. There are different challenges that you might face in the summer so instead of going all in, let’s set ourselves up for success. What are the few crops you eat the most during winter? Try growing those easy things, and then each year as you begin to learn more about growing with the various seasons you will become more comfortable and can continue to add in more crops.

My first year growing during the fall and winter I focused primarily on brassicas, I learned how to grow broccoli and cauliflower and cabbage well, then the next year, I added in root crops, like carrots, beets and rutabagas, and now several seasons into growing through the winter its not only our favroite time to grow its when we grow the most food. We’ve leveraged our growing zone and know what does well, and we really use that to our advantage to crank out a lot of food for our family.



Adapt to Your Frost Dates

Pay attention to your region's average first and last frost dates. Plant winter crops early enough to allow them to mature before the first frost and plan for late-fall plantings that can withstand light frosts to extend your harvest.



Use Mulch for Winter Protection

Apply mulch around the base of winter crops to insulate the soil and protect roots from extreme cold. Mulching also helps retain moisture and prevents soil erosion during winter rains.



Experiment with Cover Crops

Consider using cover crops like winter rye or crimson clover to protect and enrich the soil during winter. These crops can be turned under in spring to improve soil health.

A photograph of a woman with long blonde hair, wearing a colorful floral headband, a teal t-shirt, and black overalls. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. Behind her, a man in a blue t-shirt and a grey cap is visible, looking upwards. They are in a garden setting with green foliage and a blue trellis structure.

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Thank YOU!

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