

Gardening and planting in autumn

Autumn is a great month for planting, as temperatures drop and the harsh summer sun recedes. Now is the time to sow seeds for spring, especially for winter and spring flowering annuals, as well as all your winter veggies. The autumn months are also perfect for ensuring your garden looks good for winter and is ready for spring and summer.

You don't need to wait until spring to plant veggies. Many varieties grow well in autumn and winter and can give you a bumper crop of fresh home-grown veggies. Some leafy vegetables grow best in autumn and winter and you can also grow a variety of root vegetables. Herbs also do well in autumn. If you live in an area where the temperatures dip quite a bit over winter you want to sow your seeds while the soil is still warm preferably in late summer/early autumn. You also need to be vigilant and prepare for a frost - if your climate zone experiences this. The same applies for pests, especially with your seedlings - so look to protect these in some way.

What climate zone is my garden in?

Before you rush off to the nursery to stock up on plants for your autumn planting project, take the time to learn a little bit about your climate zone. This will enable you to choose the best plants for your area and know when the best time to sow them. Plants that are not in their optimum environment are likely to be stressed and more susceptible to succumb to pests and diseases. Some of the major climate zones include warm temperate, cool temperate, tropical and subtropical. It is also worth getting your head around your garden and how much sun different areas receive at different points throughout the day.



What can I plant in autumn?

What follows are descriptions of the climate zones that have major cities, with fruits, veg and herbs you can plant in autumn.

Warm temperate zone

Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Hobart and Adelaide are all located in the temperate zone, which is characterised by reliable year round rainfall, limited frost and warm summers. Coastal locations benefit from moderated temperatures, where you can also grow plants from the subtropical zone. With a distinct winter, you can grow fruits and veg that benefit from a spot of chill.

Vegetables to grow in autumn include spinach, green beans and peas, as well as herbs like coriander, garlic, parsley and thyme. Cool temperate zone

This zone includes much of Tasmania and the ACT and all mountainous and tablelands of NSW, **Queensland and Victoria**. Here pests are not a problem, but you do have to pick your growing season more carefully if you are planning on veg like tomatoes. Fruits like cherries and apples and other stone fruit will however thrive.

Veg that should thrive here include beetroot, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, broccoli, spinach, lettuce, onion, parsnip, potatoes and turnip. Herbs to try are chives, coriander, garlic, lemongrass, mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary and tarragon.

Subtropical zone

Much of this zone is situated in South East Queensland and Northern NSW, with mild temperatures year around, high humidity and a summer rainfall season. Besides being able to grow all the species that thrive in these conditions, you can also try some temperate species over winter.

Vegetables to plant in autumn include broccoli, lettuce, onion, peas, spinach, spring onion and turnip. Herbs that will flourish at this time of year include coriander, fennel, garlic, lavender, parsley, rocket, sage, rosemary and thyme.

Tropical zone

If you live anywhere near the top end, including north Queensland and northern WA then you will experience a monsoon driven wet, and high humidity year round. You will be limited to plants adapted to these conditions, including tropical fruit such as paw paw and mango. Pests are a problem, especially if you are growing plants to eat.

Here you can try sow beans, capsicum, carrot, cucumber, eggplant, lettuce, melons, okra, potato, pumpkin, radish, squash, sweet corn, sweet potato and zucchini - as well as herbs like basil, coriander and parsley.



Grow an autumn superfood: Kale



If you want to grow kale, one of the so-called "superfoods", you can in your own backyard

Kale, which is rich in protein, vitamins and other essential nutrients is perfect for sowing in autumn, as it is a cool season vegetable. The colder it is the sweeter your kale will taste. Grow kale in your veggie garden or mix it in with your flowers and other plants. It is a beautiful plant and you can trim it as you need it. Kale likes full sun and rich, well drained soil with a neutral pH and add compost, manure or a high nitrogen feed if your soil is not up to scratch. Plant seedlings about 1cm deep, or transfer seedlings into soil with at least 30cm between plants. Water well, apply mulch and protect from too much direct sun. In two months or so you should have a harvest of kale to enjoy.

How to grow broccoli



Broccoli is actually very easy to grow from seed in autumn. All you need is a seed tray, leaving adequate space between each seedling. Water them well and they will soon develop broad leaves if they are in full sign. Once you see the flowerheads have reached a decent size you can cut these off - typically after 10 - 16 weeks, and other may well grow from side shoots.

How to grow carrots



Who can resist a bunch of crunchy carrots fresh from the soil? Just as well that they are fairly easy to grow. They do like a lot of water and good soil with a decent amount of compost, and can tolerate some shade. Don't be concerned if they take a few weeks to germinate - this is normal, and you can pick them after about 12 weeks, or if they are the size you want.

How to grow versatile herbs



Herbs grow perennially and are relatively easy to grow, so you can plant these in autumn too. If you live in a cooler climate, you might want to grow your herbs indoors. If you live in a temperate climate, you can grow herbs outdoors all year round or grow them in pots or garden beds. You also don't need a huge backyard to get started, all they really need is decent soil, water and sunshine. So if you live in an apartment, a windowsill or balcony is all you need to get started. Before you know it you will have a herb crop on hand to use in salads, cooking and baking.