

October in the Vegetable Gardens

CHORES

-Begin cleaning the garden up-Remove any weeds and dying plants as you go. Start to clean up the garden now and it will be much easier later. Any vacant beds can now get amended with horse manure, which is a good source of organic matter. In the fall it can be hot or cold horse manure. If you wait till spring, you can only use cold manure, as it will burn your plants.

-Got any vacant beds and still want some veggies? Squeeze in cold hardy vegetable transplants like lettuce, spinach, kale, Asian greens, radishes and chard transplants. You may not get huge bundles of kale or chard but they are very nice in a salad when small. You will need to cover these crops with row cover, as the nights get colder.

Still time to plant vegetable seeds like lettuce, mesclun, spinach and carrots *if you have a cold frame, low tunnel, hoophouse or greenhouse*. These will also have to be covered with row cover as the nighttime's get into freezing temperatures. Don't have a cold frame or low tunnel or hoop house? Perfect time of year to start one!

-Start fall compost pile.

VEGETABLE GARDENS

Beans- When you finish harvesting beans cut the plant away at ground level, leaving the roots in the soil. Legume crops such as beans and peas fix nitrogen in the soil where it is slowly released as the roots break down. If you plan to grow beans next year, start preparing the site by digging trenches and filling with manure or compost.

Beets/Carrots-Harvest as you need them but be sure to get them out of the ground before the ground freezes in December.

Winter Squash/pumpkins-Harvest after the first frost. This will make them sweeter but don't wait till we get more frosts. They will deteriorate.

Cabbage- when you harvest your cabbages cut the plant off level with the ground, leaving the root in the ground, to encourage smaller leaves.

Tomatoes-Any plants with green tomatoes can be picked BEFORE the first frost and brought inside to finish ripening. I put my tomatoes in paper bags, 2 rows deep with a slice of apple and fold the bag so no light gets in. Apples produce ethylene gas. Most fruits produce ethylene gas naturally-it promotes ripening and by adding the apple slice you help the ripening process. Every 3 days, open your bags and sort the tomatoes out according how ripe they are. I.e.: all green ones

stay in the bag and those that are starting to change go into other bags according to ripeness. No need to wrap each tomato in newspaper as is sometimes suggested. What a pain that would be to unwrap each one to see where it's at!

Garlic/shallots-plant garlic and shallot in for a bumper crop next summer.

Asparagus- Wait for the fronds to turn yellow then cut back yellowing asparagus foliage to within 3 inches of the ground.

Potatoes-Wait till foliage starts to die, then dig out potatoes or leave in the ground for another month but be sure to get them before the ground gets hard usually in December. Do not wash the harvested potatoes, instead lightly brush the dirt off them and leave outside in a shady area to cure. Bring them inside after 3 weeks and keep in dark place like a pantry.

FRUIT GARDENS

Strawberries- Shear back old foliage in late October to encourage fresh new growth but do not cut the crowns where the leaves come out, just right above it.

Rhubarb-Divide congested clumps of rhubarb by digging up and splitting into several pieces. Replant the healthiest looking pieces.

Fruit Trees-Autumn is an ideal time to plant many varieties of fruit trees. Talk to *Tooley's Trees* in Truchas, NM or contact them at tooleystrees.com about what varieties to plant in the fall.

Apples-To test when apples **are ripe** gently lift them in the palm of your hand or give them a gentle pull - they should come away easily.