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Wilson County Agricultural Article from Ruth Correll, Agricultural Extension Agent

It Time to Think About Fall Gardening

I have already heard someone say, “it feels like fall is in the air.” Summer gardens are beginning to show signs of decline and their production is now limited. This presents the opportunity for a fall garden.

Fall gardens are usually more difficult to grow than spring gardens. Problems include extreme heat, drought, more difficult seed germination, insects, diseases and weeds. Successful fall gardens require close attention and considerable care from planting to harvest.

The best spring varieties are not always the best fall varieties. Spring varieties germinate in cool, moist conditions and mature as the days grow drier, warmer and longer. Fall varieties have just the opposite growing conditions: long, dry days at first and short, cool, moist days as they mature. Green beans, tomatoes and other warm-season vegetables must mature before they are killed by frost. Kale, collards and cool-season vegetables will withstand considerable frost and their harvest may sometimes continue several weeks after the first frost.

Determine the last possible planting date for all fall vegetables as follows: Begin with average date of the first frost. The average first frost date in this area is around October 15-20. Warm-season vegetables should begin to mature at least two weeks ahead of this date, while vegetables able to withstand frost can mature at least two weeks after the date of the first expected frost.

Most seed packets and variety descriptions in catalogs estimate the days from planting to maturity. Add about 10 days to this estimate because of the cooler, shorter days in the fall. Subtract the total number of days required for the vegetable to grow from the date you want it to begin maturing to find the latest planting date.

Another important point is to maintain moisture during germination. Vegetable seed will not germinate without moisture. High fall temperatures and sparse rainfall contribute to difficult conditions for seed germination. Water soils amply before planting fall vegetables. Plant seed 1/4 inch deeper than you would plant spring vegetables. Watering before the seed is planted will increase available moisture and reduce crusting. Deeper planting will reduce chances of the seed drying out. Various systems to shade the soil surface until the seedlings come up will also maintain moisture and increase plant emergence.

Care for fall gardens properly. Fall gardens require more attention than spring gardens. Insects, diseases, weeds and drought problems are all more severe in the fall. Plants are also more difficult to establish in the fall. Walk through gardens frequently and observe them. Remove weeds while they are small. Control insects and diseases before these problems become severe. Apply 1 to 1 1/2 inches of water weekly when it does not rain.
Apply nitrogen to fall vegetables as you would to spring vegetables. More detailed information on fertilizing vegetable gardens is available in UT Extension PB901, "Growing Vegetables in Home Gardens."

**Agricultural Market Summary**

**Cattle Market Trends**
The calf market has somewhat held its ground this summer but may wane as spring born calves begin coming to market the next several months. Feeder steers $4 to $8 higher, $177.00-$365.00; Feeder heifers under 600 lbs. $2 to $4 higher; over 600 lbs. steady to $1 lower, $162.50-$320.00; Slaughter cows $3 to $4 lower, $89.00-$114.00; Slaughter bulls steady, $118.50-$146.50.

**Grain Market Trends**
Corn, soybeans, and wheat were up for the week. Corn – Cash prices, $3.48-$3.77. September futures closed at $3.72 a bushel, up 1 cent. Soybeans – Cash prices, $9.35-$10.06. September futures closed at $9.75 a bushel, up 22 cents. Wheat – Cash prices, $4.53-$4.77. September futures closed at $5.10 a bushel, up 11 cents.

For additional information on these and other topics, contact the UT Extension Office, 925 East Baddour Parkway, Lebanon, TN 37087, 615-444-9584 or acorrell@utk.edu. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in all programs. Visit the UT/TSU Extension webpage at http://utextension.tennessee.edu/wilson or look for UT & TSU Extension, Wilson County on Facebook.

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Submitted by:
Ruth Correll
Agricultural Agent
UT/TSU Extension, Wilson County
acorrell@utk.edu