

The Veggie Garden 2025 in October

Things are starting to slow down in the garden now as the weather gets cooler and many crops are already done or will be soon. This was my one of my best gardens this year but I did have some problems too.

WEATHER

We did get a lot of monsoons this summer. They came early on around end of June instead of in July. The **first FREEZE DATE is usually around Oct 15th** so we should be prepared in the garden. **Now is a good time to become a weather bug and watch the forecasts carefully as we now getting nighttime temperatures in the mid to low 40's. Have your row cover ready to put on colder nights.**

START CLEAN-UP-Pull out any dying vegetable plants and dispose them or compost them. Do not put any diseased plants into your compost piles.

-You can turn off your drip system in each bed if you have turnoff valves to each plant. These are invaluable this time of year as different crops are finishing up. I already turned off some beans and cucumbers that are done for the year. You can get turnoff valves at Firebird.

-Any vacant beds can now get amended with compost, which is a good source of organic matter. If you have never remineralized your soil, consider doing so. I didn't realize that we need to add minerals and trace elements to the soil every 3 years or so but not every year. Plants use up the minerals in the soil. I use Azomite. But you could use other rock dusts. You can put it on either in the fall or wait till spring and lightly turn into the soil.

-Also, if you had a lot of blossom end rot on the end of your tomatoes this season, now in the fall would be a good time to add **gypsum** which is a good organic source of calcium. Dig in lightly in the top 3 inches.

-Remove all weeds before they flower. You can compost them. If they haven't gone to seed. Otherwise dispose of them.

-This season I sent off soil samples to 'gro organic' for a soil test in spring. I only tested the soil in section 3 of my garden. I chose this section because the tomatoes have struggled in years past in this section and this year I was due to grow them there since I rotate my tomatoes to different beds every 3 years. I was concerned that something was off in the soil in that section and I was correct. Turns out the soil was very high in **NPK-Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), and Potassium (K)** and they told me not to add any fertilizers or compost this year so the plants could use up some of the nutrients. I will get another test after I pull the tomatoes to see if the soil adjusted to an acceptable level. Turns out there are several soil tests out there one for fields and one for beds and all this depends on who you get the test from. I unknowingly picked the test for fields. When I wrote them concerning the results, they asked which test I got. They told me that I accidentally picked the field test. Normally the nutrient numbers go down rather fast but in a raised bed, the nutrients last in the soil much longer as they are

confined by the borders and don't leach out as much. I didn't know this. They told me people who have raised beds in healthy, rich soil don't usually need to amend their soil as often as people who grow in open beds with no borders or in fields. Also, it turns out I had a water problem in those beds as well which I will talk about in a minute.

COMPOST PILES- Hopefully most of you save your kitchen scraps and are making compost. If not, perhaps you could start a compost pile and start to heat it up before winter sets in so it will be ready by spring to spread in your garden. I use blood meal as a nitrogen source to kick-start my pile in the fall so it has time to decompose. I don't use nitrogen in the spring as I don't want to put hot compost on my beds then. If you don't like animal sources, you can use cottonseed meal, which is almost as high in nitrogen as blood meal. Use leaves, coffee grounds, and healthy dead plants in the compost pile along with eggshells and **non-meat** kitchen scraps.

***IMPORTANT-**Avoid horse manure in compost unless you know that it doesn't have herbicides in it. How do you know if it has herbicides (weed killers) in it? You don't, unless you do some investigating with the company or owner you are buying from. If they don't know, don't get it. I'm talking about bulk compost, not bagged compost which is usually fine. This is a problem in our area. The only way to know is for you or the owner of the hay to contact their feed store or the hay farmer to make sure the farmers are not spraying their hay crops with herbicides. You can also start bean seeds in the compost to see if they die after germination before you add it to a bed. If so, don't use that compost. If the hay was organic, then it is fine as the growers are not allowed to use herbicides on their crops.

NOTE: I had to rehome my horse this year and so I no longer buy hay. Now I am in the same boat as many of you. However, I've found a good source to buy herbicide-free compost at **Reunity Resources**, here in Santa Fe. Check to see if they sell it in bags as well for those of you who don't have a truck or trailer.

Now, If you are a worm farmer- Continue to feed and water your worm composting piles. Bring plastic worm composting boxes inside. If worms live in an outside area, cover with 6-8 inches of straw. Continue to feed throughout winter and water so soil doesn't dry out. Stop feeding if your worm compost freezes and only water when the soil is no longer moist.

WATERING SYSTEMS-When you are ready to put the garden to sleep, disconnect hoses and turn off drip systems to gardens. Pull batteries out of the timers and store inside. **Disconnect hoses and turn off all drip systems to gardens when a HARD FREEZE is imminent. Take off the timers as they have little manifolds inside that can freeze and crack and they are not cheap to replace.** I do not blast air through lines and have never had a blow out

VEGETABLE GARDENS-PLANTING-Garlic/shallots-October is the perfect month to plant garlic and shallots. Plant garlic now for a crop in early summer. Planting in the fall gives the roots a head start for next spring without a lot of top growth. Work some compost into your soil and loosen it up a bit, plant the biggest cloves pointy side up and cover with 3 inches of soil, then cover with 4-6" of straw for the winter but don't forget to water in the winter. You can order garlic now online or check with the local nurseries or our local Farmers Market to see if they have any garlic. Just be sure if you buy at the Farmer's Market, that you pick the biggest heads. Bigger cloves mean bigger heads next year.

Plant shallots with the tips just poking thru the soil, Not really deep. Put straw over them as well and water the same. Shallots also do well if you want to wait to plant in spring.

VEGETABLE GARDENS-STILL HARVEST

Eggplants/Peppers-Still lots of peppers but I'm waiting for the peppers to turn red if possible. Pick all before they freeze no matter the color.

Beans-Dry beans-Every year I grow a lot of dry beans. I love them as refried beans, or to cook them and add to soups and stews in winter. They are easy to grow, relatively bug free. You can eat them as green beans when they are small but I prefer to grow varieties for fresh eating separately from dry beans. Examples of dry beans would be pinto beans, black beans or Italian dry beans, etc. Harvest dry beans when the pods are dry but before a freeze. If you leave dry beans on the plant too long, the pods will burst and drop the seeds so don't wait too long. Check every day. If a freeze is eminent, and they are almost bone dry, pick them. Then bring them inside to finish drying and shell them later in winter. I've already turned off a couple of bean beds that are done.

Green Beans-A good variety is Rattlesnake beans with our warm summers for fresh eating. Rattlesnake beans are very heat tolerant.

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

Cucumbers-Mine are really slowing down and now some are getting bitter which they can do when the plants get old. So basically, they are done. I'm going to pull them and turn off the water to them.

Summer squash-should harvest before a frost.

Winter Squash/pumpkins-Harvest just BEFORE the first hard frost. This will make them sweeter but **don't wait till after we get a hard freeze**. Most winter squashes will last several months and some even longer inside.

Asparagus- Wait for the fronds to turn yellow probably in late October or November, then cut back yellowing asparagus foliage to within 3 inches of the ground. Cover with 4" of straw for the winter. Be sure to water in the winter if we don't get any snow. My asparagus beds did not do well this year. Next year, I'm going to plant more male varieties as they produce more spears. Research online.

Potatoes-Wait for the leaves to mostly die back and then dig up potatoes. Don't clean off dirt as that promotes rotting. Give them a couple of weeks to cure in a cool, dark pantry or shelf or outside in a protected area like a portal before storing them. Keep them dry.

Onions- Onions-Harvest when tops fall down. Leave dirt on until they cure. Cure them someplace outside out of the sun and bring inside when a freeze is eminent.

TOMATO TALK

-Now back to my watering problem in section 3. The tomatoes never got enough water because it is at the end of my huge drip system. Three ways to fix this is to loop the drip system back on itself to equalize the water. The second way is to make more drip systems. So, I divided that 3rd section into 2 drip lines as I felt maybe I had too many emitters on one huge line. The third way is to add individual drips, (not the ¼ inch drip line that has drips every 6 inches. So, instead I added one .5 gal/hr emitter right at the base of each tomato plant and it worked!

-Any plants with green tomatoes SHOULD be picked BEFORE the first frost and brought inside to finish ripening. Some people wrap each tomato individually in newspaper-I don't do that. Some people pull the plant and hang it upside down in their garage-I don't do that (I don't have a garage). I have a pretty simple method. I put tomatoes in grocery 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- ethylene gas promotes ripening and by adding the apple slice you help speed up the ripening process. Every few days, open your bags and sort the tomatoes out according how ripe they are. i.e.—all green ones stay in bags and those that are starting to change color go into other bags according to ripeness.

Saving Seeds-Now is a good time to save seeds from your crops. For more info on how to save seeds, go to Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners.com. There is lots of info on seed saving there. Also, the internet has info, but I don't go to Pin Interest as I find there is so much misinformation on it. Save seeds from heirloom or open-pollinated (OP) varieties of vegetables. Easy crops include tomatoes, beans, winter squash, & flowers. Don't save seeds from hybrids.