

2025-What to Do in the November Vegetable Garden

WEATHER-We have been in a neutral weather pattern for most of this summer. A neutral weather pattern is a period when neither El Niño nor La Niña conditions are present. we are supposed to go into a weak La Nina pattern this winter. Historically this means drier conditions in winter with less precipitation in the Southwest. We have had a decent monsoon in Santa Fe this summer. Even with that, we are still low in total precipitation for this year. Going into winter those last few storms in Oct were substantial. This will be good for the trees and native plants going into winter. You'll still need to water your perennial plants/trees about once a month, unless if we get more precipitation as we go into winter. Also we are in shorter days and longer nights, which doesn't matter unless you have chickens and want eggs in the winter in which case you'll have to add supplemental light at night as chickens need 14-16 hrs of light a day to lay eggs and if they get less, they will shut down egg production in winter. We are currently getting around 11 hours of daylight each day with daylight getting shorter.

BIOLOGICAL PRODUCTS-Be sure to bring in any products in your garden shed that have soil microbes or bacteria in them in products such as Montrey Complete Disease control and Mycorrhizal products. Soil microbes are live organisms and will die in freezing weather. Read the label. I'm going to put them in the house where it is warmer. Freezing nights are due to arrive in early November this year so bring them in now.

GARDEN NOTES- Need to make notes about what happen in the garden this year because if you are like me, you won't remember everything next planting season. Successes, failures, problems-things I can look at next Spring to refresh my memory. As you are cleaning up your vegetable garden, think about what you grew and how it did. I take notes in my phone as I walk around.

Take notes on which varieties did well, and how much you harvested. This is important because you might have had a great crop of one variety and might want to plant it again. Or some variety might not have done as well or produced as much. Many people can't even remember which variety they liked so this is helpful info.

What pests did you have to deal with this year? What did you do or which pesticides did you use? Did they do well?

Was there one garden bed that didn't perform very well? It will also give you time to research solutions to problems you may have encountered.

You might want to make a diagram of where any diseased tomatoes were from this season. You shouldn't replant tomatoes back in those spots again for 2-3 years. It's called plant rotation-Find a new spot to plant tomato plants or put them

in new spaces between where you planted last year or try growing them in pots. Jotting down these details now while they are fresh in your mind will help you plan your vegetable garden for next year.

TOMATO TALK-I just saved any green tomatoes that I still had on my tomato plants. It's important to pick them before a freeze. If they freeze, they will not ripen and get mealy when you go to eat them. I put my green tomatoes in paper bags with a slice of apple which releases ethylene gas which is a natural ripening agent. Then I close up the bags and check on them several times a week and I move them into other bags as they start to ripen and then into bowls to finishing ripening. They will still be 100% better than store tomatoes. I usually eat or sauce them in November thru December.

GARDEN CLEANUP-Continue to clean up the garden. Take out the garden if you haven't already. **Dispose of tomato plants, all cucumber and squash plants. Don't compost any of them as you don't want to spread any possible diseases they may have had since they are very disease prone** and if you don't get your compost pile hot enough, you may not kill all the pathogens. Get a compost thermometer to see if you are getting your compost pile hot enough to make good compost-Temperature should be between 130° to 160°F

GARLIC and SHALLOTS-plant them now-last chance

This is your last chance to plant fall garlic. December will be too late as the ground will freeze, so you need to plant both garlic and shallots now if you want early summer crops. Fall planted garlic will do so much better than spring planted. But you can wait till spring to plant them, you will get garlic later next summer and the heads will be smaller.

COOL SEASON CROPS-It is too late to plant any cool season crops outside either by seed or transplants. Cover any cool season crops you already started for a fall garden with mid-weight row cover at night to protect them as long as possible from freezing. People call and ask if they can use a sheet-the answer is no. I wouldn't as it doesn't add much protection. Row cover which usually adds 3-4 degrees protection which will make them last longer to harvest when the nights get cold.

I still have chard, carrots and lettuce outside and they are all thriving under row cover at night. But when I turn off the drip systems, I will have to water by hand with a hose, bucket or watering can.

GATHER LEAVES-Fall leaves are truly gardeners' gold. I try to gather as many leaves as I can in the fall and fill up my compost bins or store in garbage bags to use later. Fall leaves can be used for mulching or composting. I go around town looking for bags of leaves that people are throwing away on pickup days (Hint-the bags are light) or call up a landscaping company to see if you can come get

their bagged leaves.

GOPHERS-Fall is gopher season around here. I just got back from a vacation and boy there are suddenly a lot of mounds. First I had one mound and 4 days later I have 6 mounds. I hate to hurt anything, but I refuse to let gophers kill my 30-year old fruit trees so I snap trap them. Trap them now if you see mounds. I trap gophers in spring and fall. If I get them in spring, I usually don't see the mounds again till fall. Also, just because you see a lot of mounds doesn't mean there are a lot of gophers. Gophers are very territorial and usually there are only a few actual gophers. I haven't had any gophers all summer but they are here now!

To trap them, find a mound and start by pounding a piece of rebar into the ground, not in the mound but away from it several feet all directions. When the ground gives away easily, you dig a hole to find the tunnel. Place a trap on either side of hole to catch them coming from either direction.

They are very active in the fall. Do not use poison as it can kill some of the animals that might eat them. Gophers particularly like fruit trees.

TOOLS-Find all your tools if you left them out in your garden and put them into a garden shed or garage. Cleanup blades and sand and oil wooden handles if needed and straighten out that garden shed while your there. And set some mouse traps in case they think the row cover is really just blankets for them in the winter. I put my row cover in plastic garbage cans to keep the mice out.

AMENDMENT SPECIALS-Look for specials on seeds, seaweed, SuperThrive, Yum-Yum mix, and Fish emulsion both online and in local nurseries. They can be really cheap right now.

ENJOY FALL-Take time to enjoy the crisp, cool days of fall as you work in the garden. No humidity certainly makes outdoor work more comfortable. Observe the beauty around you and the warmth of the sunlight. Give gratitude to your garden as it is a living thing! Take a deep breath and enjoy the fresh aroma of the soil. Soon all will be covered with snow and frozen until spring and nothing but a memory.

Next month I will do a review of tomato varieties and other crops from this season.