Fall Container Gardening

The price of organic kale, collards, and broccoli are likely to continue to increase. So even if you have room for just a few containers on your deck or balcony, if you act quickly, you still have time to grow some gorgeous winter greens.

Most garden centers and nurseries have potted starts of kale, broccoli, and collards available during the month of September. This is a good thing, because it’s a bit late to start winter greens from seed in most zones after Labor Day.

Kale and collards are easy to grow and are the best bets for greens that will winter over. Spinach and chard, if you have the space, make for tasty fall feasts, yet once winter comes, the delicate leaves of chard, spinach, and lettuce are likely to wither away.

If you have gardened in containers before, you might have a designated space and a few supplies on hand – potting soil and some two, three, or five gallon containers with drainage holes. For container gardening, choose a potting soil that has vermiculite or perlite added, and if you anticipate heavy rains, consider adding a bit extra to help with drainage. A small amount of coarse sand can be mixed into the potting soil either with, or in lieu of, the vermiculite or perlite.

Minerals have a magic all their own. By adding a balanced fertilizer to the potting soil on the day you transplant, you’ll be giving the winter greens an extra boost. And – no surprise – when you eat these greens, the living minerals from the healthy vibrant plant will enter all the hungry cells of your body.

If you are growing on a deck or balcony, you will want to choose smaller containers that are spread evenly so they don’t put too much weight on your given foundation.

With a yard or patio you have more options when choosing containers. A creative gardener can make use of dozens of objects – anything that will drain – and turn them into growing containers. Some may be quite unique and some purely functional and practical.

A five gallon bucket with holes pierced in the bottom is a classic example of a functional, practical, garden container. With two gallon containers, plant just one or two kale or collard plants. A five gallon container can hold two to four and, as you continue to harvest the outer leaves, these plants will produce for months.

If you find yourself inspired to start a fall container garden, have fun with it! Maybe a few garage sales or thrift stores will help you to gather some outrageously shaped non-toxic gadgets that can be transformed into growing pots. .

The sooner you can get to the nursery or garden center in September, the better your chances of getting some starts. So cheers to you and happy gardening!