Planting a Fall Garden

In the midst of summer fun, those who love garden fresh greens for months to come will take the time now to sow the seeds of kale, cabbage, broccoli, and collards. When we are savvy and sow the seeds in August, these cruciferous crops get off to a healthy enough start to withstand frigid winter weather.

What is so beautiful about this reality is that we can harvest the greens, especially of kale and collards, all winter long and for most of next spring.

Use whatever space you have, a deck, balcony, patio, small plot, or large garden. After you purchase your seeds, soak them for 8 – 12 hours and sow these seeds ¼" deep in loose soil.

The choice to sow the seeds directly into beds or to start them in flats or small pots is up to you. Planting the seeds directly in four inch pots, about 25 cents each at garden centers, insures that you have a strong and vital plant when you are ready to transplant into beds or larger containers.

Another reason some choose to go the route of four inch pots is for the sake of enjoying the rest of the summer garden edibles until the time comes to harvest. When the tomatoes, peppers, melons, corn, and summer squash come to their end, a little bed preparation goes a long way in setting the tone for the healthiest fall garden plants.

The great news in your near future (come six weeks down the road when the bed space is ready) is the kale, collard, cabbage and broccoli starts will be very well established.

August is also a good month to plant lettuce, spinach, radishes, turnips, beets, and, depending on your zone, rutabagas and parsnips. These plants tend to do best when directly sown into their permanent home, so skip the small

pots on these crops.

A few herbs that tend to thrive when planted in August are chives, oregano, thyme, sage, and rosemary.

If you don’t have a full on backyard but do have a little space, like an apartment balcony or any place that gets sunshine, a few garage sale trips can help you to gather planters or miscellaneous items that can be transformed into planters. A five gallon bucket with holes drilled in the bottom works wonders.

First step, however, to relish in those luscious greens this fall and winter, is to start the seeds now. As you read this, consider grabbing a piece of scratch paper and jotting down your list of what you’ll need to buy or gather in order to feast on the fabulous fall and winter foods. If the fresh taste isn’t motivation enough, think of all the time and money you’ll save by not driving to the store, shopping, and spending cash on foods that you grew from tiny seeds!