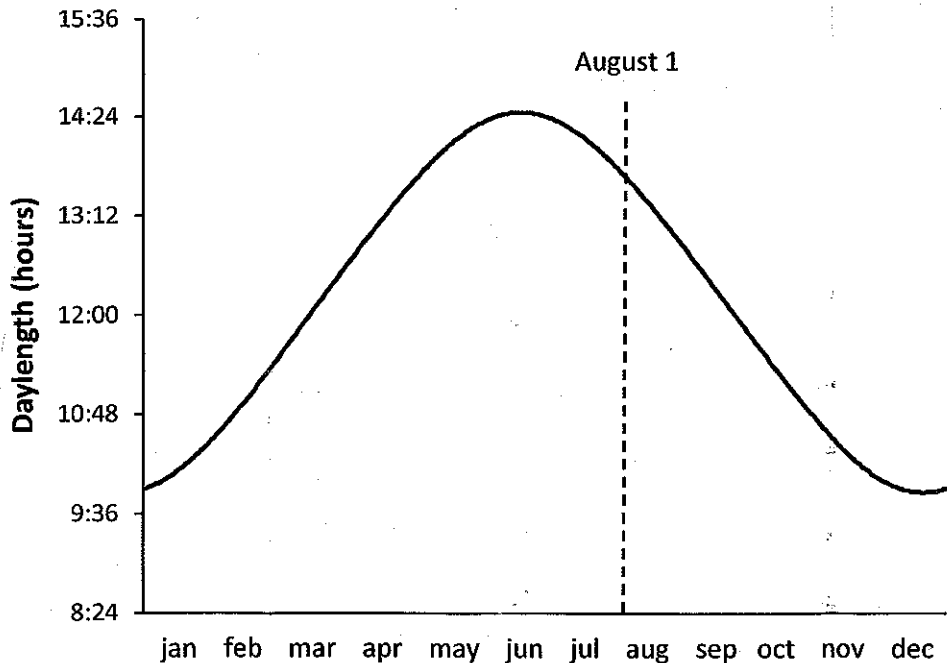


Thoughts and Tips on Fall Gardening In North Mississippi

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Fall is a wonderful time to garden in north Mississippi. Statistically, our fall frost date is around the middle of October, but often we're frost-free into November. By mid-September, the heat usually breaks; insects are on the wane; and lower humidity means less pressure from fungus and disease. Furthermore, many vegetables – root crops and members of the Brassica family in particular – become sweeter and more palatable after a frost or two as the plant begins to convert stored starches into more readily available sugars. Many of the crops I've recommended below will stay alive in the garden well into the winter with little or no protection: turnips, kale, chard, arugula, and cabbage typically persist all the way through to spring in my garden.

The most important thing to remember about planting in the fall is that the days are rapidly getting shorter. Even though we have lots of sunny days well into November, after August 1, day length begins to decrease by about 2 minutes per day, and by the end of September, days are nearly three hours shorter than at the summer solstice in mid-June. Consequently, plant growth slows way down after about mid-October. This means that it is crucial to get fall plants started and well established while they still have plenty of light, even though it may seem odd to be planting fall crops on a stifling August day. Early planting is especially important when starting plants from seed. It is also typically very dry until November, so watering may replace weeding and insect patrols as your primary gardening duty.



Suggested fall vegetable crops and approximate planting times:

Root crops

Beets - @ 50 days from seed, August 1-15

Carrots - @ 60 days from seed, August 1-15

Turnips - @ 40 days from seed for greens and roots, August 15-Sept 15

Scallions - @ 60 days from seed, August 1-15

Bulbing onions are not recommended for fall planting, but garlic and shallots should be planted beginning mid-October until Thanksgiving for spring harvest.

Salad greens

Head lettuce - purchased when available from local suppliers or started from seed in mid-August (@ 30-50 days)

Mesclun (mixed baby lettuces) - @ 30 days from seed, planted every 2 weeks (or more frequently as the season progresses) beginning in late August for a steady supply

Spinach - purchased when available from local suppliers or started from seed in early September

Arugula - @ 30 days from seed, sowed successively, beginning late August

Brassicas and Cooking Greens

Broccoli - purchased when available from local suppliers or started from seed in late July (@ 55 days)

Cauliflower - purchased when available from local suppliers or started from seed in late July (@ 50 days)

Collard or Mustard greens - purchased when available from local suppliers or started from seed in mid-August (@ 50 days)

Kale and Chard - @ 50 days from seed, mid-August

Brussels sprouts - purchased when available from local suppliers or started from seed (@100 days) in early July

Cabbage - purchased when available from local suppliers or started from seed (@ 70 days) in mid-July

Braising greens - @ 30 days from seed, sowed successively, beginning late August

Peas

English peas - @ 50 days from seed, August 1-15

Snow peas - @ 60 days from seed, August 1-15

Sugar snap peas - @ 55 days from seed, August 1-15

Some Online Resources:

The Harvest Helper Planning Wheel available at www.theharvesthelper.com for \$10.95

Gardenplanner.rhshumway.com Free to set up, \$25 annual subscription

'Vegetable Gardening Planner' at www.caes.uga.edu/extension

"Planning a Vegetable Garden" at www.ag.udel.edu/extension