



FALL IS HERE - NOW WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR YOUR PLOT?

For those gardeners who enjoy gardening year-round, winter vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and an assortment of greens can be grown in the Fall and winter. The temperatures are usually mild, and if it's dry and cool, disease pressure can be low and insects can be less troublesome after the temperatures drop. But, for those who are ready for a little break from the vegetable garden there are a few things you should do before you put your summer garden to bed.

It's interesting to see how long the summer garden, planted way back in the Spring, may last. Tomatoes, okra and eggplants will literally grow throughout October in years when Georgia has a late frost. Other years, an early cold spell will terminate those late-harvest plants.

Many diseases and insects love to overwinter in crop residue from the old harvest and will be out in full force the following Spring, if left on the ground. Another problem is that old, over-matured vegetables will die on the plant and disperse seed that will ultimately germinate next Spring where you don't want them. This second generation of seed may well have cross-pollinated, producing plants that are inferior and different from what you actually planted. **ALWAYS** pull up expired crops at the end of the season. Not doing so will create problems. Besides, those old corn stalks will make a great Fall porch decoration.

Fall is a great time to work on conditioning your soil. If it's been more than two years, take a soil sample to your local UGA Cooperative Extension Office, which is located in Lawrenceville. You need to know the pH level of the soil. Fall is the best time to add lime if needed, as it takes several months for it to actually adjust the soil pH. There are soil sample kits in the shed.

If the soil isn't too wet, till the garden to expose any insects, nematodes and soil pathogens to the cool, dry weather. This is a perfect time to add amendments such as compost or other organic matter like cow and chicken manure to the garden. Fallen leaves that have been shredded will breakdown quickly when tilled into the soil and will turn into rich organic matter, but be sure to shred the leaves for good decomposition.

Cover Crops: Planting a cover crop offers benefits that prevent erosion and adds organic matter when tilled into the soil in early spring. Green cover crops also looks good to have a green area in your garden when everything else is brown and dormant.

If you plant crimson clover, you will be rewarded with a show of color when it blooms in the spring. You can even combine two types of seed mix together, such as wheat or oats with some crimson clover seeds. The clover is a legume, or nitrogen-fixing plant, that will actually help the wheat and oaks grow. In return, the wheat and oats act as a nurse crop to the clover, which is slower to establish and needs a little protective shade.

Clover should be inoculated first with the appropriate bacteria to aid in germination. A feed store or garden center should be able to assist you with getting the proper inoculum. An alternative might be to buy commercially produced mixes. These mixes come pre-inoculated. Remember to give cover crops some initial fertilization to get them started like spreading 10-10-10 in the non-organic section and an organic fertilizer in the organic section.