More Plants for the Vegetable Garden

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In the vegetable garden we have been planting a wide variety of cool weather producers by seed and transplant.

All the cole crops including broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, collards, and kohlrabi are available as transplants at area nurseries. Mustard, Swiss chard, Chinese cabbage, and kale are also available as transplants. Consider seeding carrots, lettuce, beets, turnips, and rutabagas.

The timing is also right now for 3 special plants that you may want to consider for your garden- spinach, English peas, and strawberries.

Now that the temperatures have cooled and it is less likely we will have hot spells, spinach can be planted either as transplants or by seed. It is a favorite high nutrition green for salads or cooked dishes.

Plant spinach transplants one foot apart in rows after preparing the soil by incorporating 2 inches of compost and 4 cups of lawn fertilizer into each 100 sq. ft. of garden bed. Ashley is the common spinach transplant available on the market but a small number of Coho transplants should be available in 4to 5 weeks.

There is a choice of spinach seed at most nurseries including the variety of Monstrueux that did so well as a winter crop in 2013.

Like all greens, spinach is a high nitrogen consuming vegetable. In addition to the soil pre-treatment, side dress each 8 feet row of your spinach planting with one cup of winterizer or slow-release lawn fertilizer every 3 weeks. Harvest the spinach foliage leaf by leaf as you need it, never removing more than one/third of the foliage at one time. Three 8ft rows should provide enough spinach for a small family. It should produce into May.

English peas can also be seeded now. Regular shelling peas can be planted but my favorites are the sugar peas. If you have a fall tomato crop the timing is just about perfect to plant the seed around the cage to use it as a trellis. The tomatoes end production because of the cold weather just as the peas begin their fast growth and production period.

The third special plants to consider for planting now are strawberries. There are 3 varieties on the retail market that have fared well in testing in our area- Festival, Radiance, and Seascape.

Purchase the plants and then remove all runners, blooms, and small fruit from the plants until January. As tough as it is to persuade yourself and your young gardening partners to remove the early blooms and fruit, the special pruning allows the plants to concentrate on developing roots and foliage to maximize the spring crop.

The plants can be planted 2 feet apart in rows in a raised bed or in imaginative ways in containers, including topsy-turvey hanging baskets, strawberry pyramids, or strawberry pots. Google strawberry containers for ideas.

Strawberries are cold tolerant and should grow through the winter without covering to protect from the cold. Protect the plants and fruit from slugs and snails with slug and snail bait.