

JULY & AUGUST IN HOUSTON AREA VEGETABLE GARDENS

by Bob Randall, Ph.D.

***Excerpted from " Planning the Fall Vegetable Garden"
(Houston Chronicle)***

By August, warmth-loving quick-growing veggies can go in the ground. Plant bush snap bean seeds, Edamame edible soy seeds, and summer squash seeds. In early August, you can even get a new crop of sweet potatoes if you choose a 90-day variety like Beauregard.

As well, there are many kinds of Cabbage family relatives (Brassicas) suitable for August seed planting or September transplanting. I mainly grow heirloom cabbages like Early Jersey Wakefield or some of the beautiful blue - purple Savoy varieties. We can also grow early and later broccolis, and both the gorgeous violet cauliflowers and the ordinary white ones.

Brussels sprouts are also possible, especially north of FM1960, but July planting from seed is best. Collards and kales (both European and Siberian) by contrast are very easy, and by far the most nutritious of any vegetable. I especially like the heirloom Green Glaze. All of these, however, need very good soil fertility. Use a balanced organic fertilizer (about 1/2 cup per square foot or more) and re-fertilize especially if you see yellow or reddish leaves.



Brussels sprouts, Siberian kale and Green Glaze collard greens



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As with many fall vegetables, the difficult choice is between planting the seeds where they will grow and using transplants. If you plant the seeds, you will need to water daily for a while, and protect them from snails and their kin. I use shears to cut the bottoms off gallon nursery pots and circle the area where three seeds or so are planted. This keeps off birds and most snails, and tells me where to water in the searing heat. Later I cut off all but the best one.

If you grow transplants, you can keep them away from pests easily, but will need to transplant them at some point. It is not at all easy to move plants in September, so the care if anything will increase at that point. If you will be gone in late August, your only option is to try to buy quality transplants in September. Although you will have less variety choice, this option works especially if you find healthy green plants without wiry stems in three-inch wide pots.

Whether you buy or grow transplants, be careful to do the following:

1. Keep small plastic pots out of direct sun, since they heat up.
2. Plant late in the day or on a rare rainy day.
3. Construct light shade over newly planted plants and keep there until the plants are growing well."