

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



PHOTO BY William M. Johnson

Master Gardener volunteers and members of a Boy Scout Troop helped to unload fall vegetable transplants during last year's Fall Plant Sale. A variety of fall vegetable transplants will be offered at the 2015 Fall Plant Sale on October 10 at Carbide Park.

I do not like the shorter day lengths as September comes to an end and October nears. However, the cooler (more or less, depending on the week) daytime temperatures over the autumn season sure soothe my displeasure with shorter day lengths.

Weather forecasts for this week predict day time highs will remain below 90 degrees and night time temperatures to be rather pleasant. Cooler days over the next several weeks will make it a joy to get

out and work in the home vegetable garden, and better yet, plant an array of delicious and nutritious vegetables that will thrive in the fall planted garden.

Indeed, some of our favorite vegetables can be grown here with the arrival of cooler weather conditions. Now, for some of the cool-season vegetables you can try: My gardening friends know that broccoli is at the top of my list for vegetables to grow in the fall garden. I recom-

mend that gardeners try growing broccoli as this vegetable is remarkably easy to grow in our area. When planted in October, gardeners can expect to be harvesting broccoli by early December. Broccoli plants should be spaced 12-to-18 inches apart. Closer spacings will produce smaller heads but total production is slightly greater since you have more plants per row or bed.

I include broccoli in my fall garden at home and



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it has never failed to produce. I even plant broccoli among some perennials in the front lawn. I have yet to get a letter from the dreaded homeowners' landscape maintenance squad for doing so since broccoli provides a very attractive addition to the drab winter landscape with its broad green leaves. (That may change after publication of this column.) Mid-October is an ideal time to plant broccoli transplants.

Broccoli heads are harvested when the largest flower buds in the head are about the size of the head of a kitchen match. It is common for gardeners growing broccoli for the first time to leave the heads on the plant too long.

Never allow the flower buds to open or the quality of the broccoli head will be reduced. After the main head is harvested, side florets will be produced, and harvesting can continue for several weeks. These florets often double the production of each plant.

Cauliflower is another good choice for your fall garden.

Cauliflower should be spaced 18-to-24 inches apart. Again, closer spacing will greatly reduce the size of the head. Cauliflower produces only one head, so after harvesting, remove the entire plant from your garden to make way for planting something else. For white heads, blanch the cauliflower by pulling the leaves up

over the head when it is about the size of a silver dollar. Fasten the leaves with a clothespin or twine and check the head frequently. Harvest before the curds of the head start to separate.

Other excellent vegetables recommended for fall gardens include cabbage, kale and collards. All of these can also be transplanted now through mid-November.

Transplants of broccoli, cauliflower, beets, and collards in addition to many other types of fall vegetables will be available at the upcoming Master Gardeners' Fall Plant Sale on Saturday, October 10, in Carbide Park located at 4102 Main Street in La Marque. A preview seminar will be conducted from 8:00 to 8:55 a.m. and the sale yard will be opened at 9:00 a.m.

Strawberry transplants will also be offered at the Plant Sale. Master Gardener Robert Marshall is our expert on growing strawberries. He has grown several strawberry varieties in his home garden and recommends Sweet Charlie for its early ripening and very sweet fruits. Sweet Charlie has excellent disease resistance which makes it an ideal variety for the backyard gardener.

We offered Sweet Charlie transplants at last year's sale and I purchased three transplants. I was rewarded with a good crop of tasty and juicy strawberries

last March. While we recommend that gardeners in this growing area treat strawberries as an annual plant (due to our summer heat), strawberries can survive over the summer if provided good care including watering and fertilizing. Indeed, the three strawberry plants I planted last fall not only made it through the summer but have multiplied to nine plants.

I expect to be able to harvest a larger crop next spring. I plan on re-locating 3 or 4 of the transplants into a container which works well for strawberry production. If you are wondering if freshly pick strawberries are sweeter than those purchased from the grocery store, know that just like tomatoes there is no comparison.

As you can surmise, the upcoming 2015 Fall Plant Sale will have something of interest to all gardeners. Be sure to visit our website (<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html>) to review the list of all plants and plant descriptions that will be available.

Proceeds from plant sales are used toward development and maintenance of the Horticulture Demonstration & Research Garden located in Carbide Park which is open to the public.

