Vegetable Varieties for Bell County
by Debbie Lauer, Bell County Master Gardener

It's hot out there! It is hard to think of it now in August, but after the heat of the summer there comes an opportunity to grow a second crop of vegetables. Now is the time to start planning for a fall and winter crop of vegetables and herbs. The most important key to a successful fall and winter garden is timely planting.

To determine when you need to plant your fall vegetables you need to know the average date of the first frost. For Bell County that date is 16 November. When planning a fall garden you should choose the earliest maturing varieties that grow well in our area. To figure out when to plant a particular vegetable, take the number of days that it takes the vegetable to mature, add two more weeks to allow for slower growth during cooler, shorter fall days, and then add three more weeks if the vegetable is frost tender. Frost, susceptible vegetables include; beans, cantaloupe, okra, peas, peppers, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, squash, tomatoes, and watermelons. Now that you have a total number of days count backward from 16 November and that is your planting date.

Based on which vegetables you want to grow, it may mean planting during the hotter part of the summer. Here are several things to think about to ensure a successful planting. If you had a spring/summer garden you will need to replenish nutrients to your soil. You can do this with a small application of fertilizer or with a light layer of compost. Because the soil is hot and dry this time of year, seed germination can be delayed. Plant after a good rain, or after you have watered the area thoroughly. Plant seeds twice as deep as you would in the spring and water them in thoroughly. After that, the Master Gardener Handbook suggests this trick to aid germination: place a board over the rows. As soon as the sprouts reach the surface of the soil remove the board. You can also use plastic covered with a layer of mulch to keep the dirt cool. Be aware that black plastic may cause the soil temperature to get too hot. If you use plastic, be sure that the soil does not dry out underneath it. You can also apply mulch between rows; this will help keep the soil from getting too hot and drying out.

When the seedlings are well established be sure to mulch to reduce weeds and help control moisture loss. You can save yourself some work by purchasing and transplanting some of your plants; Tomatoes, Lettuce, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Beets, Onion, and Cabbage readily transplant. Insects are the next big worry as they are very active in the summer and fall so keep a vigilant watch for them. The warm days and cool nights of fall can result in some of the tastiest vegetables of the year. Give it a try!!

Here is a list of the varieties known to do well in Bell County in either season. Not everything thrives in our clay soils, these varieties should.

**Bush Beans:** Contender, Topcrop, Blue Lake, Romano, Tendercrop, and Greencrop.
**Pinto Beans:** Pinto III, Luna, Taylor's Horticultural.
**Pole Beans:** Stingless Blue Lake, Kentucky Wonder, Dade, Romano.
**Lima:** (bush) Jackson Wonder, Fordhook 242, Henderson Bush, (pole) Florida Butter, Sieve.
**Beets:** Detroit Dark Red, Green Top, Bunching, Pacemaker.
**Broccoli:** Green Comet, Emperor, Premium Crop.
**Brussel Sprouts:** Jade Cross, Prince Valent.
**Cabbage:** Globe, Early Round Dutch, Greenback, Golden Acre, (red) Red Acre, (savory) Drumhead, Superette, Rio Verde, Gourmet.
**Carrot:** Imperator, Danvers 126, Nantes, Red Core Chantenay.
**Cauliflower:** Snow Crown, Snow King.
**Chard:** Lucullus, Rhubarb.
**Collard:** Georgia.
**Sweet Corn:** Calumet, Bonanza, Merit, Golden Security, Florida Staysweet, Guardian, (white) Silver Queen, Country Gentlemen, Sweet G90.
**Cucumbers:** (pickling) National Pickling, Picadilly, Crispy. (slicing) Poinsett, Straight 8, Cherokee, Sweet Success.
**Garlic:** Texas White.
**Mustard:** Tendergreen, Florida Broadleaf.
**Lettuce:** Great Lakes Strains, Valverde, (leaf) Black Seeded Simpson, Salad Bowl, Rudy, Oakleaf, (butter) Summer Bibb, Tendercrisp, (romaine) Valmaine.
Okra: Clemson Spineless, Louisiana, Green Velvet, Dwarf Green, Emerald, Lee, (dwarf) Annie Oakley.
Onion: Granex (yellow and white), Red graney, Grano 502, (green) Beltsville Bunching, Southport White, (bulb) Y1015.
Parsley: Moss Curled, Evergreen.
Southern Peas: Blackeye No. 5, Brown Sugar Chowder, Burgundy, Champion, Cream 40, Knuckle Purple Hull, Pinkeye Purple Hull.
Sweet Pepper: Yolo Wonder, Keystone, Bell Tower, Resistant Giant, Valley Giant, Shamrock.
Hot Pepper: Long Red or Thin Cayenne, Hungarian Wax, Jalapeno, Serrano, TAMU Wild Jalapeno.
Sweet Potato: Centennial, Rose Centennial, Jewel.
Spinach: Early Hybrid 7, Dixie Savory, Melody: (summer production) New Zealand, Malabar.
Turnip: Purple Top White Globe, Royal, Globe II, Tokyo Cross, (greens) Seven Top, Crawford, Shogoin.

Try planting different varieties to find the one that you like the best or will grow best for you. This list is a start point to help you find your favorites.

For more detailed information read "Texas Home Gardening Guide, Publication B-6003", available from the TCE Bookstore online. Log on to [http://bell-co.tamu.edu](http://bell-co.tamu.edu) and click on TCE bookstore. This guide and other useful publications are available at Aggie Horticulture, a service provided by Texas Agrilife Extension and Texas A&M.