Succession Planting



Article

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Learn how to stagger plantings to spread out your harvest and often dodge pest problems.

QUICK START GUIDE (DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS BELOW)

1. 1. **Maximize your** harvest by removing early cool weather crops and replacing with summer crops.
2. 2. **Start successive crops in flats** and transplant to the garden as space becomes available.
3. 3. **Use cover crops** to protect and enrich beds between spring and fall crops.
4. 4. **Create microclimates** to extend the season for cool weather crops.

All across the northern temperate zone, a popular question in early June is "Got your garden in?" As if it was a one shot deal; like you plant it and you're done with it.

Well, even in the far northern U.S. where it can frost in late May or early June, many gardeners are already on to their second planting in a few beds by early June. Out with radishes, in with a crop of beans; out with wintered-over spinach, in with tomatoes or cucumbers. By staggering plantings you can spread out your harvest and often dodge pest

problems as well.

Technically, succession planting refers to successive sowings of a single crop at specific intervals to ensure an extended harvest. We use the concept somewhat more loosely here.

TRANSPLANTS AND SUMMER COVER CROPS

By early summer, you can turn over what's left of your early spring planted salad greens to make room for summer transplants or the next direct seeded crop. Starting seedlings in flats in anticipation of space that will open up 4 to 8 weeks later saves room in the garden, and makes it easier to provide the extra care needed to grow tender young seedlings into strong transplants. Try to always have some seedlings ready to take advantage of any

space that opens up in the garden.

Another option is to grow a quick summer cover crop in between spring and fall planted vegetables. Try planting buckwheat in vacant beds to keep the soil covered until it is time to plant again. You can cut the cover crop and put it in the compost pile, or chop and drop it for use as a mulch around transplants of fall greens and brassicas.

CREATE MICROCLIMATES FOR EXTENDED HARVESTS

While you usually get only one chance to grow the main season summer crops like tomatoes, melons and eggplants, cool weather crops give you multiple opportunities to extend the season on both ends. One way to successively plant cool weather crops in the summer is to create shade for them in the garden and keep them moist. For example, try growing summer lettuce or endive under your bean trellises, or spinach in the partial shade around your sunflowers. You can also use shade cloth or shade trees to mitigate the heat of the summer sun.

In autumn, coldframes or frost blankets can extend the harvest long into the fall and winter. Plant cold tolerant crops like salad greens, kale, broccoli, cauliflower and leeks in August and September to keep a portion of your garden productive while cover cropping the rest.

By creating microclimates in the garden and planting throughout the season, you can grow many of your favorite crops over a much longer period. Whether it's providing shelter from the summer sun, protection from the frosts of spring and fall, or an insulated environment in the dead of winter, you can sustain a longer and bigger harvest, and maximize the use of your precious garden space.

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