



Edible Crops for Autumn Sowing Top Tips

If you've gone to the trouble of getting an allotment, creating a vegetable plot in your garden or building raised beds, it's frustrating to see them gradually empty in the late summer as you harvest and eat your crop.

There are some vegetables that you can grow in the autumn and over winter, which I'll list below. However, do remember that you need to make sure that your soil is in good health as well.

Soil improvement

If you're planning winter crops I'd advise you to replenish the soil by adding plenty of organic matter (manure or compost) and some general fertiliser, such as chicken manure pellets or seaweed feed.

When you've cleared your bed/plot spread at least 5cm of organic matter on top of moist soil and lightly fork it in. Take care to avoid standing on the soil, so if you have a ground bed use a plank to stand on, which will spread your weight and prevent too much compaction of the soil. Alternatively create temporary 'paths' with thick cardboard and just cultivate the soil between the 'paths'. Usually growing beds should only be 1.2m (4 foot) wide so an average adult can work them without the need to stand on the soil. But if you are growing with children or have restricted mobility reduce the width of the beds to make life easier.

After you've worked in the organic matter add your fertiliser. For chicken manure allow two weeks between application and seed sowing, or it will burn the seedlings. If we are having a dry autumn (it does happen occasionally!) make sure your beds/plot are well watered *before* planting out or sowing seed. Now you're ready for your next season of crops.



Crops to sow in the autumn

Winter salad crops

Lettuce: 'Winter Gem' 'All the Year Round' 'Artic King'

Spinach: 'Perpetual' 'Giant Winter'

Radish: Most varieties can be sown up to September

Endive: 'En Cornet de Bordeaux' – will crop all winter under a cloche

Christmas potatoes

Potatoes are usually planted in the spring, but you can also plant some in August/September, when the soil is still warm. They will grow and produce a small crop in time for Christmas dinner. The varieties of 'Charlotte' and 'Maris Piper' are ideal for this purpose.

Autumn planting for earlier spring harvests

Kale will happily grow throughout the winter and you can keep cropping the plants. An added bonus of growing them at this time is that you don't have to net them to protect against caterpillar damage.

Carrots can be sown in August/September to produce an early spring crop – the best variety for this is 'Autumn King'

Turnip: 'Atlantic'

Some Pea and Broad Bean varieties are winter hardy, but are best grown on a sheltered site, where cold winter winds cannot damage them.

Broad Beans: 'Aquadulce Claudia'

Peas: 'Meteor'

Varieties in the Allium family can be grown from cloves, seed or sets (small onions) in the autumn, good varieties are

Garlic: 'Red Duke' 'Provence Wight' 'Bohemian Rose' (from cloves)

Shallot: 'Yellow Moon' (from sets)

Spring Onions: 'White Lisbon' (from seed)

Onions: 'Shakespeare' 'Electric' (from sets)

