

October in the garden 2026

WEATHER-VERY HOT YEAR FOR GARDENING

Looking backwards with this podcast, in 2023, we had a bad vegetable gardening season, much like this year. And 2022 wasn't much better-also another hot year with little rain. So, we have had bad years before. So, if you too had a tough year, you're not alone.

This year the monsoons barely came. The weather people said it came, but barely at my house. Again, hit or miss throughout Santa Fe. I used up more water just to keep things alive. But it wasn't just the lack of water for this season, but the heat also was oppressive with many daily high records broken. Now add that to spring which was one of the windiest I can remember which is hard on transplants when planting in spring. And the row cover to cover my crops, got a lot of holes in it from the wind, which resulted in a 20% tomato plant loss from Curly top Virus disease for the season and it wasn't even summer.

This hot weather and lack of rain really impacted our growing and harvesting of many crops. Now that the temps are finally cooling, things are slowing down in the garden, many crops are already done or will be soon. So as crops finish up, pull them and stop watering.

But now as of this recording, in mid-September (for the October podcast), we got over .5 inch of rain on one mid-September day/night with more predicted for the week, which everything loves-both critters and plants, and me! Finally-we are getting some monsoons and cooler weather. At least some of us...

As a note-The **first FREEZE DATE is usually around Oct 15** so we should be prepared in the garden. Cover any remaining crops with row cover at night if a freeze is imminent. **Become a weather bug and watch the weekly forecasts carefully.** Of course, a freeze can come sooner or later. This is just a guide.

So, I'd like to talk about what struggled in my garden and what did well. Let's start with the bad news.

So, what struggled this year? Between the heat and the critters, it's been tough. Here's my review of 2026.

GARLIC AND SHALLOTS

I must go back to last fall. The garlic bulbs and shallots I planted the previous fall in 2025 (I always plant them in the fall to produce bigger heads and earlier harvest in June) and the new asparagus starts this year that I put in got eaten by squirrels. I've been live trapping them and am down to one or two left going into fall. They also ate many flowers that they were not supposed to be attracted to according to the internet.

FRUIT TREES

Since we got a very late freeze in spring, the apple trees dropped all their blossoms. I'm used to apricot and this year pear blossoms getting hit by normal freezes. But I've been on my property since 1995 and the apple trees are around 28 years old and I always get a crop of apples, but not this year. Not even one.

OTHER CROP STRUGGLES

My **radishes** bolted early on.

The **carrots** stalled out but now with the recent cooler weather in mid-September, the remaining ones are doing better.

The **chard** burned up

The **cauliflower** bolted.

The **cabbage** burned up.

The **lettuce** bolted.

The **okra** which is supposed to love the heat produced 1 little okra.

Some of the **dry beans** barely produced. Too hot.

The **tomatoes** dropped many of their blossoms earlier in June and July with all the heat. They did come back but I didn't get as many bigger slicers this year.

The **winter squash** only produced about half of what I normally get.

The **summer squash** fried, so no zucchini. I never thought I would want more zucchini (usually I have too much) but this year I do.

The **green beans** did not do well. Poor pollination due to the heat.

The **strawberries** did not produce much fruit this year due to heat.

Watermelon-I only have 1 watermelon this year.

Eggplant-The whole plant struggled-no eggplants.

Dismal enough?

I know many of you have had successes this year-this is just my crops.

What did pretty good this year

I did have some good crops this year. Not all was lost.

The **squashes** did not get Powdery mildew either.

The **pepper patch** with 18 varieties of peppers did well.

The **cucumbers** did pretty well-enough for me to make pickles.

Raspberries-Blackberries-Grapes-did very well. I covered them with row cover and gave them extra water. Getting a bumper crop of raspberries this fall.

CHORES

DRIP SYSTEMS-If you have a drip system, disconnect hoses and turn off all drip systems to gardens when a hard freeze is imminent. Take off the timers and bring inside as they have little manifolds that can freeze and crack in winter.

GARDEN CLEAN-UP-Pull out dying vegetable plants and dispose them or compost them. **Do not put any diseased plants into your compost piles-like tomatoes and squash.** Any vacant beds can now get amended with compost, which is a good source of organic matter or you can grow cover crops that you will turn over before they go to seed. Also fall is a great time to re-mineralize your soil with rock dusts **IF** needed as the plants use up the minerals in the soil. I use Azomite. But you could use other rock dusts. You can put it on either in the fall or wait till spring and lightly turn into the soil. **This is something you might do every 2-3 years but not every year.**

MAINTAIN YOUR COMPOST PILE-I know mine is very dry so now I am reviving it with water and I use blood meal or cottonseed meal for a nitrogen source to kickstart it again. Also add leaves, coffee grounds, and healthy dead plants in the compost pile along with crushed eggshells and non-meat kitchen scraps. I do not add horse manure anymore due to herbicide problems that some farmers spray on their crops that ruin the manure as a source of nitrogen.

VEGETABLES TO PLANT

Garlic/shallots-LATE October is the perfect month to plant garlic and shallots. Plant now for a bumper crop in early summer. Planting in the fall gives the roots a head start for next spring without a lot of top growth. Work compost into your soil and loosen it up a bit, plant the biggest cloves pointy side up.

VEGETABLES-HARVEST SOON

Warm season crops are finishing up. Pick anything before it freezes.

Beans-Dry beans-Every year I grow a lot of dry beans. I love them as refried beans, or to cook them and add to soups and stews in winter. They are easy to grow, relatively bug free. Harvest dry beans when the pods are dry but before a freeze. Do not pick after a rain. Make sure they are dry.

Green beans-fresh eating. Pick before they get too tough. I grew Rattlesnake green bean this year. I also let some of the pods on green beans dry to get more seeds for the next year.

Peppers-All peppers will die in October and when it does freeze at night-they will be finished like tomatoes. Pick BEFORE a freeze or sooner if ready to harvest.

Summer squash-should harvest any as soon as ready.

Winter Squash/pumpkins-Harvest BEFORE a HARD freeze. This will make them sweeter. Most winter squashes will last between 2-6 months. Leave some stem on them. Let them 'cure' for 2-4 weeks inside or outside, then bring them inside.

Harvesting tomatoes-Any plants with green tomatoes SHOULD be picked BEFORE the first frost and brought inside to finish ripening. I have a pretty simple method. I put tomatoes in paper grocery bags, 2 rows deep with a slice of apple and fold the bag so no light gets in. Apples produce a natural gas called ethylene gas. Most fruits produce ethylene gas which promotes ripening and by adding the apple slice you help speed up the ripening process. Every few days, open your bags and sort the tomatoes out according to how ripe they are. I.e. all green ones stay in one bag and those that are starting to change color go into other bags according to color and ripeness and those that are colored up can go in a bowl to finish ripening.

That's it!