

SEPTEMBER VEGETABLE GARDENING_2025

I can't believe it's already September!

WEATHER—Last year we had a pretty good monsoon season but not this year. This monsoon season has been dismal in most part of Santa Fe with very little precipitation and lots of heat. Many days I watch the rain clouds go around me. With lack of water, and all the heat, my water bill is high.

Temperature wise it has cooled down into the mid to high 80s in the day and high 50s in the nights. Cooler evenings start to slow down the ripening process of many veggies and be prepared for some cold nights in late September. Have row cover ready to throw over your plants at night if we get a freeze later this month and take them off in the mornings so your plants warm up in the day to continue ripening your crops. I can't believe I'm saying this with it being one of the hottest summers on record!

HAIL—I've only had hail one time this year at my place. I've been using 30% shade netting as hail and shade cloth over most everything and the plants are doing very well and that shade cloth will help if hail comes again. I especially like it over my squash plants as they tend to wilt in the middle of a warm day, and they are much happier with a little shade over them. Looking back, I would get all 30% shade cloth from Johnny Seeds and use it as both hail netting and shade cloth.

BUGS-

HORNWORMS-Keep a lookout for tomato hornworms. If you see them, take them off and put in a bucket of soapy water to dispose them. I use gloves because I am squeamish. I like to go out at night about once a week with my ultraviolet flashlight and shine it in my tomato plants and if there are hornworm, they will glow and are easy to find. I have found many smaller hornworms that way, along with the big ones. Hornworms tend to stay more on the outer leaves and not in the interior of the plant. Look for them hanging upside down on the branches too, not on top.

SQUASH BUGS-This year my butternut squash and Fruilana summer squash got squash bugs which is unusual as both are usually resistant to them. Squash bug eggs are rootbeer color and hatch between 7-10 days so, I go out once a week (every 7 days) to keep them under control before they hatch. Use duct tape or scrape off the eggs. If you don't, the eggs hatch into little grey nymphs with black legs. I usually find them on the underside of the leaves. Sometimes there are so many, I've had to slowly cut off the whole leaf and quickly put that in soapy water before they run away. Be diligent and go out every 7 days.

APHIDS- You can spray water on your plant to knock aphids off, or you can spray Neem or Azamax for aphids. But spray plants in the early evening after the bees go to bed and never spray in the middle of the day as you can burn the leaves on hot days. I see more aphids in the spring instead of now.

GRASSHOPPERS- I really haven't seen any this year but the best way to protect your plants if you see them is to cover the plants with row cover or shade cloth to keep them off your plants- they create a physical barrier so the grasshoppers can't get to them.

DISEASES

TOMATOES-There is very little Early Blight on tomatoes this year in my garden due to almost no rain. Early Blight usually shows up when the monsoons come and this year's monsoon is so little, I only have a little bit showing up. The lower leaves turn yellow and blotchy and it starts at the bottom. If not addressed, it will creep up your plants and eventually kill them.

If do you get Early Blight, trim the infected leaves or branches off and spray both the tops and underneath the leaves with **Monterey Complete Disease Control** or **Copper Fungicide**. Be sure to disinfect your trimers between plants with bleach water-about 2 tablespoons per gallon as you can spread it from plant to plant. I'm using **Monterey Complete Disease Control** and it is working well for Early blight and powdery mildew.

POWDERY MILDEW-I don't have any powdery mildew on squashes this year again due to it being so dry. For powdery mildew, I spray **Monterey Complete Disease Control** or **Copper fungicide** on my squash plants to help control it. Don't wait too long. Better to get control of it early.

NOTE: I never compost any tomato or squash plants as you may spread the fungal spores around in your garden if you don't get your pile hot enough. So, to be careful, I dispose of them in the garbage.

TOMATO TALK!

So now we come into September with both the days and nights getting cooler which is good and not so good. Good because tomato blossom drop only happens when it is 92°F or warmer and hopefully the days will not be getting that hot again. The not so good is because it is getting cooler now at nights, it will slow down the ripening of the actual tomatoes. Is there anything we can do to speed the process? Not really. Some people revert to putting row cover back on their tomato plants at night if they only have a few plants, but I don't do that because I have too many. I just keep a close eye on them daily to see what is ready to pick and bring them inside to finish if they have some color.

I don't see any more blossom end rot, sun scalding, cat facing or cracking on the tomatoes this year. However, if there is a big storm coming, I usually turn off the drip system for a day or two or stop watering to try to keep the tomatoes from cracking from too much water.

HARVEST TIME

September is another big harvest month, like August and will be full blast right now.

HARVESTING TIPS-

Beans-best harvested before the green beans swell inside the pods and get tough and stringy. I grow both green beans and dry beans. If you are growing dry beans, harvest when the bean pods dry out. Examples of these would be pinto beans. Dry beans are my favorites.

And if you planted heirloom varieties of any bean, you can let some of them stay on the vine and dry out and save the seeds for next year. But don't do that till you are basically done with them as the plant will stop producing.

Tomatoes-pick while still firm and have some color. I don't worry about cracks-it comes with heirloom tomatoes because they have thinner skin. Don't even put them in the refrigerator, the tomatoes will not be as flavorful as ones you leave on the counter.

You'll need to pick most green tomatoes before it freezes because if you wait till after it freezes, they'll be mealy and ruined.

Peppers-They should be getting ready to cut off. Green varieties can be ready now and red varieties as soon as they turn color. Always cut them off instead of pulling them off and taking a chance of taking the whole branch.

Kale-You can keep taking the outer leaves and the inner leaves will continue to grow out. Aphids do love kale so spray your plants often with water to knock them off.

Chard-Again just take the outer leaves as it will continue to produce leaves.

Carrots-Carrots can stay in the ground till you need them and will actually get sweeter if you leave them till just after a frost.

Eggplants-can be harvested by cutting them off anytime they are shiny looking.

Onions/shallots- After harvesting, be sure to put them in a shady place and let them dry out with the dirt on them. This is called curing and after the skins are dry, you can knock off the dirt and store in a cool dry dark place. Do not rinse them off -it makes them rot sooner.

Squash

-Summer squash is best picked young when the fruit is still shiny. Dull, large squash are too far gone. Keep picking or they stop producing.

-**Winter squash** needs to stay on the vine to mature and cure. This means usually you don't harvest till just before or after a light frost.

FALL GARDEN

Many cool season crops can be grown again for a fall harvest since the heat is basically gone. At this point, you can either plant some by seed or buy starts to get a fall harvest. If you buy starts from a nursery, you will be ahead by about 3 weeks than if you plant by seeds because they do the germination for you. But you can still plant lettuce, arugula and radishes by direct seeds in the ground because they germinate so quick and you will have enough time to still harvest them.

Cool season crops include:

Lettuce, mesclun

Arugula

Spinach

Dwarf Bok Choy

GARLIC AND SHALLOTS-They are not cool season crops but can be planted in late Sept through October before we get a hard frost. **Hard neck varieties of garlic** do better in our colder climate and shallots all do well. If you plant both these crops in the fall, the garlic heads and shallots will be bigger when you harvest and you will be able to harvest them in early summer instead of waiting to plant them in spring (which you can do) but they will be smaller.