

2026-November Vegetable Garden

WEATHER-We are moving into an **El Nino** weather pattern this winter thru spring. We've hardly any rain from the monsoons this summer and then suddenly in mid-Sept we got 8.65 inches of rain in two weeks, and El Nino is not even here yet. The weather patterns El Nino and La Nina are not part of the monsoons we get in the summer. Our monsoon season was very spotty here this summer. The normal amount of total precipitation for NM year is 14.21 inches which includes snow so to get this much moisture thru the end of the growing season is phenomenal after being in a drought and heat period. This helped move us from an extreme drought at the beginning of the growing season to almost normal. This immensely helped all the trees and plants. Going into winter we are in pretty good shape moisture wise for the native plants and trees. But of course, if we don't get any more precipitation in winter, you'll need to water your perennial plants/trees about once a month.

DRIP SYSTEMS-Turn off the drip system timers if you haven't already, and bring them inside to let them dry. Take out the batteries and store them inside as well. I never drain or blow out the drip and have never had a problem as the water will come out the emitters.

BIOLOGICAL PRODUCTS-We have already had several freezing nights in October, so be sure to bring inside any products in your garden shed that have soil microbes in them in products such as Monterey Complete Disease Control and Mycorrhizal products. Read the labels to see how to store.

GARDEN NOTES-I need to make notes about what happen in the garden this year-you know, successes, failures, problems-things I can look at next Spring to refresh my memory. I had a dismal year what with the heat and drought. As you are cleaning up your vegetable garden, think about what you grew and how each did. Take notes on which varieties did well, and how much you harvested. What pests did you have to deal with this year? Was there one garden bed that didn't perform very well? It will also give you time to research solutions to problems you may have encountered. I need to make a diagram of where my diseased tomatoes were before I forget. Shouldn't replant tomatoes back in those spots again for 2-3 years. It's called plant rotation-Find a new spot to plant tomato plants or put them in new spaces between where you planted last year or try growing them in pots. Jotting down these details now while they are fresh in your mind will help you plan your vegetable garden for next year.

SEED COLLECTING-I feel we all need to collect seeds, but maybe not all seeds. You can save seeds from both heirloom and open pollinated (OP) varieties, as they will grow out true to the variety. But hybrid plants are unstable, so I don't save them. How do you know if your plant is a hybrid or open-pollinated or heirloom? Look at your seed package or plant tag (if you can find them). It will say there if it's a hybrid (also called F1). If you haven't saved any seeds before,

go through your garden and see if you might still gather seeds from before finishing cleaning out the garden. I still have to go thru and gather seeds from flower heads, which are easy to see once they dry and collect now. It's a great place to start. There are many sources of how-to save seeds online.

GARDEN CLEANUP-Dispose of dead tomato plants, cucumber and squash plants in garbage bags. I don't compost any of them as I don't want to spread any possible diseases they may have had since they are very disease prone and if you don't get your compost pile hot enough, you may not kill all the pathogens and take the risk of infecting your soil with pathogens.

Rake any debris and get rid of it. Add 1-2 Inches of compost-either homemade or bought at nurseries. Also **Reunity Resources** in Santa Fe sells it in bulk or you can bring your own buckets or containers. Lightly dig it in-no deep digging as you will harm the soil organisms that live in the soil. Lightly means 3 inches. The only exception to this would be if you are starting new beds, you will need to add more compost the first year-4-5 inches, and you can dig it in a little deeper with the native soil. Around here our native soil is not very fertile, and compost will help with that. If you add 2" of compost every year, you will get more and more fertile soil. You will notice a difference in a few years. But you must have patience as Rome wasn't built in a day and neither are gardens.

Remove any materials used for supporting your plants, like bean stakes, tomato cages or trellises. Clean all of these items by wiping them down or spraying them with a 2 to 1% solution of water and bleach. Don't forget to clean your tools too. And I sharpen my hand pruners, loppers and oil any tools before putting them to sleep.

COMPOST/VERMICOMPOST

Hot compost pile: I need to finish heating mine up. I add coffee grounds, kitchen scraps, and leaves from other plants or trees that are dropping their leaves and bloodmeal or cottonseed meal (to heat up the pile-add nitrogen) are good to add to the partially composted piles and turn them after the first initial heat and let them sit over winter. Get a compost thermometer to see how well it is heating up. Soon I won't be adding any kitchen scraps, as they will not break down when they freeze in the dead of winter.

Vermicompost pile: also known as worm composting. You'll need to continue feeding the worms thru the cold months except if there is snow on them. Also give them some water on a warm day occasionally.

GOPHERS- Fall is gopher season around here. First, I had one mound and within a few days, I had 4 mounds. I hate to hurt anything, but I refuse to let gophers kill my 35-year old fruit trees so I do snap trap them. Trap them now if you see mounds. I trap gophers in spring and fall. If I get them in spring, I usually don't see the mounds again till fall. Also, just because you see a lot of mounds

doesn't mean there are a lot of gophers. Gophers are very territorial and usually there are only a few actual gophers. I haven't had any gophers all summer but now they are here!

LATE FALL PLANTING

GARLIC-plant garlic-Do it now

Fall planted garlic will do so much better than spring planted. As long as your ground hasn't frozen there is still time to get some garlic in. It may be getting harder to find garlic seed this late in the year. You can get your garlic online, from a nursery or from a Farmer's Market or you can save your own seed garlic. Be sure to put some protective mulch like 10" of straw over your bed. Fall planted garlic means your garlic is able to start growing in spring earlier sometimes as soon as mid-February. You will give the garlic 6 or more weeks head start. Planting garlic is simple, just select the largest cloves in a bulb and plant them 3 inches deep pointy side up. Plant 6 inches apart. Garlic is one of the easiest carefree vegetables to grow in your garden.

SHALLOTS-Plant them now like garlic but not as deep. The pointy side should be barely poking out of the soil. Again 6 inches apart. Different varieties are available online.

COOL SEASON CROPS-Cover any cool season crops with medium weight row cover at night that you may still have out in the outside garden to protect them as long as possible. I still have kale and chard outside, and they are all thriving under row cover at night. In the morning, I pull back the row cover to let the sun warm them up, then cover them again the next night.

STILL GROWING! Also, I now have lettuce starts that are ready to transplant in my green house and cold frame. Again, if the weather gets close to freezing or lower, I have to cover them with row cover and if it gets really cold, like in the 20s, I will double the medium weight up, putting 2 layers on them. My goal is to have home grown lettuce by Christmas.

GATHER LEAVES-Fall leaves are truly a gardeners' gold. I try to gather as many leaves as I can in the fall and fill up my compost bins or store in garbage bags. Fall leaves can be used for mulching or composting. I even get leaves from a local landscaping company.

TRADITIONAL COMPOST-I need to finish heating up my regular compost pile. I use coffee grounds, leaves, dead plants but no weeds and kickstart it with bloodmeal or cottonseed meal as a nitrogen source to heat up the pile and add to the partially composted piles and turn them. Soon I won't be adding any kitchen scraps as they will not break down in the dead of winter. This is for a regular compost pile.

VERMICOMPOST- Another and easier way to compost is to have a worm composting pile (also known as vermicomposting). If you have an existing vermicompost pile, you need to continue to feed them kitchen scraps but no meat sources until either the ground freezes or there is snow on the top. Give them water as needed, only not as much. They should not be dry but somewhat damp but not drowning. And if you haven't started one, wait till next spring.

TOOLS- Look for any of your tools if you left them out in your garden and put them into a garden shed or garage. Clean blades and sand and oil wooden handles if needed and straighten out that garden shed. And set some mouse traps in case they think the row cover is really just blankets for them in the winter.

AMENDMENT SPECIALS- Look for specials on Seaweed, Thrive, YumYum mix, and Fish emulsion. They can be really cheap right now.

ENJOY FALL- Take time to enjoy the crisp, cool days of fall as you work in the garden. No humidity certainly makes outdoor work more comfortable. Observe the beauty around you and the warmth of the sunlight. Take a deep breath and enjoy the fresh aroma of the soil. Soon all will be covered with snow and frozen until spring.

NEW! GARDEN QUESTIONS- I want to start a new section on this podcast answering some gardening questions I get. Every month I will have a few local questions that I might share and answer regarding vegetable gardening. I will try to answer questions if you email me at; jcabossel@hotmail.com

How do you store shade cloth, row cover or hail netting in the winter?

I put them in garbage cans. This will keep out mice. And I label the lids for each one. And sometimes I even label which bed it was over (to remember next year)

How many main stems should each tomato plant have? I allow 2 main stems and many smaller stems from them. If you allow more main stems, it becomes unruly and not enough light gets in the interior for production.

Is it possible to start lettuce seeds now in November? Yes, if you start them inside your house with lights. It might be better to see if any of the nurseries have started some so you can plant as soon as possible.