

Fall Gardening is Here! Written by Garden Inspirations August 18, 2011

The interest in local and fresh vegetables has become a popular topic. You can find local selections at grocery stores or your local Farmer's Market, but maybe this is the year to have fresh and local vegetables in your own backyard. Gardening can be done in a container on your balcony, a raised bed in your yard, edibles planted in your landscape or a kitchen garden, or a small garden in your backyard - the time to plant for fall is now. Squash, green beans and okra are seeds that need to be planted immediately. Tomatoes and peppers can be planted from transplants now. In a few weeks cool weather plants will go into the ground. Spinach, collards, radishes, cabbage, broccoli, carrots, leeks, mustard greens and kale are great vegetables to plant for our tremendous Texas fall gardens. Economics, nutrition and flavor are enticing the novice to bring out the shovel and dig in the soil. The satisfaction and joy of growing, gathering, cooking and eating nature's bounty from your very own garden is what keeps the seasoned gardener going.

Has your interest been perked a little, wondering how to get started? It starts with the soil, whether a container, raised bed, or in the ground. When you have healthy soil, you will have healthy plants, and therefore a healthier you. For your container gardens, be sure to choose good organic potting soil such as Vortex, by Lady Bug or Big Pot by Rabbit Hill Farm. These products contain sound nutrients for growing vegetables and have no chemicals. (Vortex by lady bug will however will stain cement patios, you may want to consider this). You will want to choose larger pots, the Texas temperatures dry out small pots quickly and you will be more successful if you start with a large container. Many vegetables will grow in a container such as: squash, lettuce, spinach, collards, kale and much more.

The following is an example of container gardening with a tomato plant, we've listed this in a step-by-step method:

Steps and your list of



items to purchase for your Tomato Container Garden

1. Purchase 4" to 1 gallon tomato plant from a reputable nursery
2. Purchase 4" basil any variety (Basil plants and Tomato Plants are companions, which means they bring great nutrients to the soil and root systems for each other)
3. Choose and purchase a rather large pot that measures 15" or more across the opening with drainage hole (you can re-purpose a pot that you have around your house as well)
4. Choose organic potting soil from reputable nursery (we recommend Vortex Potting Soil or Big Pot Potting Soil)
5. Purchase earthworm castings, MaxiCrop seaweed and tomato and pepper food (we recommend using Rabbit Hill Farm products if your local nursery carries this brand)
6. Save 2 to 3 egg shells and crush to add to soil when planting (egg shells provide calcium for the tomato plant)



Steps to Plant the Tomato Container Garden

1. Drop a few pebbles/or broken pottery in bottom of pot (this is to secure drainage)
2. Pour organic potting soil into container
3. In a separate bucket fill with water and a capful of Maxicrop Seaweed (Maxicrop seaweed is a root stimulant)
4. Place plant in its original container inside the bucket that has the water & Maxicrop seaweed mix
5. Place soil in your 15" container and make a well (a deep hole) in the soil
6. Place a handful of worm castings, tomato and pepper food and eggshells in the well (deep hole)
7. Wet the well (deep hole) with water
8. Take the tomato out of the bucket of Maxicrop Seaweed and water mixture, remove from its container and trim the bottom leaves of the plant and plant into the well (deep hole) burying it deep
9. Pack the soil tight around the tomato
10. Do the same with the basil
11. Put in morning sun with some afternoon shade
12. Water daily occasionally with the Maxicrop Seaweed mixed in the water
13. When blooms set, side dress with about a handful of the tomato pepper food
14. When fruit turns red pick and eat

There are a multitude of ways you can enjoy your own fresh, local, and home-grown Fall harvest, this is just one of several ways. Garden Inspirations teaches a variety of gardening classes that are affordable and will empower you to grow your own food. For more information or if you have any questions on Tomato Container Gardening, email Marilyn – marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com Enjoy the Fall Harvest!