

Seed Library and When to Plant in Fall
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If you've been in the new community building in Columbus, you may have noticed the small cabinet painted with flowers and vegetables. This is the seed library. It is a co-project of the Columbus Library Foundation and Extension Master Gardener volunteers.

Master Gardeners obtained seed through donations from many local businesses. Beginning last spring, people were able to take seed for free. This past spring and summer, seed was taken at least 327 times. This is a great response.

Along with providing seed, Master Gardeners also teach gardening classes. Two are scheduled for this fall. On September 7, the class is on Covers Crops for Home Gardens and Soils with Ben Beller. On October 13, Squash in Fall, Uses and More will be covered by Marilyn Schmidt. Both will be held 2:00 to 3:00 pm at the library. No registration is required.

Along with classes, Master Gardeners are now obtaining seed donations to refill the library for next season. The seed is typically one to three years old and stored correctly to maintain viability. If you have leftover seed to donate, it can be dropped off at the Extension office at 2715 13th street.

And did you know fall is for planting? It is the best time to plant cool season turfgrasses like Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue. It is the only time to plant spring blooming bulbs. It is a great time to plant trees. And even some vegetables could still be planted.

For lawns, seeding is recommended by September 15, especially tall fescue. Kentucky bluegrass could be seeded later and be fine, unless we have an early hard freeze. Soil preparation is important in establishing turfgrass. For information, go to: <https://go.unl.edu/establishingturfgrass>

Spring flowering bulbs are best planted after soil temperatures have cooled. October is the time for planting bulbs in Nebraska. It's also a good time to plant garlic. Ideally, plant about six weeks before the soil freezes. This requires some guesswork, but planting in early October works well. Prior to planting, incorporate compost into the soil of the bed and work it in eight inches deep.

Fall is a very good time to plant shade trees and even evergreens. Shade trees can be planted almost up until the soil freezes. Evergreens are best planted in September and early October to allow time for root establishment to reduce the risk of winter desiccation.

A common and costly mistake made when planting trees is planting too deep. If planted too deep, trees struggle to establish, are stressed over their lifetime, and may develop issues like girdling roots. The trunk taper, where the first lateral root comes off of the tree, needs to be visible above ground after planting; and, the soil beneath the root ball should never be loosened. Dig holes wider, but no deeper than the root ball. Tree roots grow outward, not downward.

While it's getting late to plant most vegetables, cool season vegetables with short days to maturity can still be planted for a fall crop. This would include radishes, green onions, and lettuce.

Fall is also a good time for transplanting. Perennial flowers are often divided and replanted in fall. Maybe a small tree or shrub needs to be moved to a new location. Rhubarb and asparagus are also commonly transplanted to new locations during fall.

When transplanting, wait for cooler weather to arrive. Most things can be transplanted September through October; but earlier allows for better root establishment before the ground freezes. It is important to keep the soil of newly planted and transplanted plants moist, not saturated, up until the soil freezes.