

What to Plant This Fall

Three cold-weather veggies to add to your garden

By Sarah Pfladderer



Broccoli

It's no secret that broccoli is a bit top-heavy. For this reason, plant your starters up to the bottom set of leaves to prevent the plant toppling over. Plant them 12 to 18 inches apart in well-draining soil that's been mixed with a pre-plant fertilizer. For the quickest turnaround time from planting to plate, opt for a Bonanza hybrid, which can mature in as little as 55 days. Broccoli is a crop that keeps on giving. After you harvest the central head, wait and watch the plant produce side shoots that you also can harvest through the season.

Kale

A quintessential "cold-season crop," kale is perfectly suited to San Diego's autumn months because it prefers temperatures in the 60s. The colder the climate, the sweeter this superfood tastes, while the hotter it gets--75 degrees or higher, that is--the more bitter it becomes. Plant seeds in the beginning of October in well-draining soil, and keep the soil moist but not wet. For best results, apply a water-soluble fertilizer bimonthly and you should be ready to harvest in about 90 days. Insider tip: To keep your kale crisp, give it an ice bath after harvest and store in a bag with a paper towel to soak up the moisture.

Brussels Sprouts

Brussels sprouts take time to come into their own--about 90 to 100 days from starters to maturity. Plant them deeply in well-draining soil, spaced 18 to 24 inches apart, covering the root ball with about one inch of soil. Water them daily the first week of planting, then weekly thereafter. Halfway through the growing cycle, add a compost to the soil and be sure to break off lower leaves to avoid crowding. (Leave the top leaves for some natural shade.) Harvest when the sprouts are firm and about one to two inches in diameter.

Thank you to San Diego County Master Gardener Maria Mata for the tips provided here. Hungry for more advice? Check out *Let's Grow Together San Diego*, an evolving list of resources available at mastergardenersd.org.