

GARDENING IN WINTER

Although summer is thought of as the most bountiful time of the year for gardening, with a bit of planning your winter garden can produce ample highly nutritious food at a time of year when your body needs it the most.

Part of the key to having a good winter garden is to start sowing seeds around December / January so that plants have reached a good size by the time growth stops (April / May / June depending on local conditions). Some long-term winter crops such as leeks or parsnips need to be sown much earlier - in mid- to late-spring. Seedlings can be planted later than seeds (e.g. February / March), but they still need time to grow big enough to handle winter. This can be a bit of a challenge if your garden is still full of summer crops like tomatoes and zucchini, or autumn crops like pumpkins, so you need to plan well ahead!

Some plants suitable for planting and growing in autumn and winter in Southland:

- Cabbages, broccoli (also sprouting broccoli), kales (curly, red Russian etc.);
- Silver beet, perpetual 'spinach' beet, winter spinach;
- Daikon radish, carrots, parsnips (parsnips need to be sown much earlier);
- Leeks (need to be sown earlier), Egyptian onions;
- Celery, celeriac ('turnip-rooted celery': hardier than celery but should be planted in late spring);
- Leafy greens including mizuna, pak choi, rocket, miner's lettuce (also called Claytonia), endive, chervil and corn salad (also known as mâche or lamb's lettuce);
- Lettuce (types like Rouge d'Hiver ('red winter') and Merveille de Quatre Saisons ('four seasons marvel') will grow through most winters and take off in very early spring;
- Parsley can survive quite well over winter in a sheltered spot;
- some potato varieties can be left in the soil and harvested as needed during most winters
- Broad beans planted in autumn will grow happily over winter, producing pods in spring;
- Peas can be sown in July for a spring / early summer harvest;
- Garlic can be planted on or near the shortest day (mid-June) then harvested mid-summer;
- Perennials like chives, sorrel, asparagus, rhubarb and lovage can be left in the soil - they will die down and come up in spring (chives and sorrel very early);
- Biennials like Parcel will die down but come up and produce early.

Plants suitable for sowing or planting in early spring outside:

- Cabbages, broccoli, pak choi, kale;
- Broad beans;
- Radishes;
- Peas;
- Winter spinach, silver beet, perpetual 'spinach' beet;
- Onion varieties like shallots, spring onions etc.



Clockwise from top: corn salad, miner's lettuce, kale, leek, savoy cabbage (Pics: Pixabay).

