WHAT’S GROWING IN YOUR GARDEN?
David Muns, Frederick County Master Gardener

At this time of the year, most gardens have been put to bed, but for a growing number of serious gardeners in the Frederick area, gardening has become a four season activity. With an investment of time, effort, and planning, as well as the small cost of garden-extending products, you could be enjoying many vegetables the year round.

This time of the year, through spring, you could be harvesting all the veggies you need, except the hot weather crops. The soil will protect root crops – beets, carrots, parsnips, and radishes. Many brassicas – cabbage, collards, kale – and leafy greens – Asian vegetables, lettuce, arugula, and mustard – will withstand colder weather, especially with row cover.

How can you assure that this time next year you will be gardening?

● Plan ahead. This calls for ordering enough seeds with your regular seed order to cover your needs in the late summer when you will plant for the winter. Seeds may not be available later.

● Plan your garden space. It’s good to have a separate bed or two assigned to starting seeds. Most winter planting will take place in areas cleared of spent summer crops in August and September. You will need compost and organic material available to refresh the soil.

● Prepare for challenges. At that time of the year, you will be fighting a late round of bugs, the chance of dry weather, and your lethargy from a long year of gardening.

But it’s worth it. By early November, you will have pleasant weather, plenty of rain, and hopefully, a light frost to eliminate the nasty harlequin beetles. A combination of pyrethrin and insecticidal soap, plus a lot of pinching will help until the frost comes.

Covering your winter crops with a combination of row covers, netting, and poly film will help protect your transplants – or seeds sown directly in the soil – protected with structures of wire, PVC, or EMC hoops. Cold frames with adjustable covers will also provide you a place to safely garden through the spring.

Make winter gardening an opportunity to grow crops that bolt quickly with hot weather. Timing seed starting will guarantee that the plants will miss the heat, and grow well into colder weather. Totsoi is an Asian green that, planted early July, will winter over and supply you with both salad and stir-fry greens. A humble weed called mache or lamb’s lettuce in Europe and marketed as corn salad in America, is one of the less familiar winter crops. It has a delicate, lettuce-like flavor, hardy to five degrees F, and easy to grow. Planted around Labor Day in raised beds fortified with compost, they provide greens throughout the winter, but are quick to bolt when warm weather arrives. Several varieties are available from seed catalogs.

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More information about winter gardening – crops and row cover structures – may be found on the University of Maryland Extension’s Grow it Eat It web page, 
http://extension.umd.edu/growit

For more information about the Frederick County Master Gardener/Horticulture Program, visit : http://extension.umd.edu/frederick-county/home-gardening or call Susan Trice at the University of Maryland Extension Frederick County office, 301-600-1596. 
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