

Year Round Gardening

It's Not Too Late for Fall Vegetable Planting. Give a Dibble Board a Try!

Fredricka Bogardus, Colorado Master Gardener

Mid to late July is a great time to plant some cool season vegetables for a fall harvest. Cool season vegetables grow best during cool weather and can even tolerate some light frost. They tend to grow from seed to maturity less than 75 days, allowing a full season of growth between now and mid-October.

One of the challenges of planting seed crops can be seed spacing. Some of these seeds are very tiny and planting evenly spaced rows can be a challenge. I usually start a row, trying very hard to space the seed accurately according to the planting instructions, within a short time I run out patience with seed sticking to my fingers and just fling and hope for the best. The problem with this lack of precision is that a couple of weeks later I am grumbling about having to discard most of the overcrowded seedlings, while staring mournfully at the bare spots that could have had plants had I been more accurate in my sowing.

There a couple of ways to make spacing less random. One is to purchase or make seed tapes. Use the thinnest paper you can find (single ply toilet paper), space the seed on the paper, sticking on with a flour/water paste. Then you place the paper 'tape' in the furrow and cover with soil to plant. If you have a bored 6 year old to do the pasting this is a great approach.

A slightly more efficient approach might be to construct a dibble board. This is a tool, fairly easily constructed from a scrap piece of board and dowels. The board can be whatever size will work best for you. Lay the board flat. Start by measuring a grid pattern with 2 or 3 inch spaces. Glue $\frac{3}{4}$ " dowels cut to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " lengths at each 2 or 3" interval. Wood glue is a good choice for this job.



Photo courtesy of Freddie Bogardus

A handle on the top may make the board easier to use.

Once the board is constructed, water the planting area, press the board into the soil and you will have a template for where to drop your seed. For very small plants you may plant each hole, for others maybe every other hole. Use a honeycomb pattern to create blocks of plants. Once the seed is place simply cover the holes with soil and wait for your amazingly non-randomly spaced seedlings.

However, you sow your seed you will have a delicious autumn, munching on your extra crop of vegetables. Bon appetit!

Planting times for fall harvest of cool Season vegetables in Colorado Springs.

Harvest will be mid - September to mid - October.

Mid July (65-75 day) cool season crops: Peas

Late July (55-65 day) cool season crops: Beets, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower and Chard

Early August (40-50 day) cool season crops: Spinach, Lettuce and Kohlrabi