



What is Four Seasons Gardening?

Our mild Pacific Northwest Climate allows us to grow food all year. We all know that it's possible to grow food during the height of our summers, so *Four Seasons Gardening* generally refers to the ability to produce food during the off-season, from late-fall to mid-spring.

Benefits of Growing Food During the Off-Season

- Less local produce options available
- Minimal labor requirements (weeding, watering, pest control)
- Enhanced flavor of certain crops
- Still sporadic nice weather

Planning Winter Garden

- Plant crops for winter harvest from late July to early August
- Select cold-hardy crops and varieties (see below)
- Choose warm, sheltered, and/or well-drained areas to plant
- Rotate crops — Don't put plants from same family consistently in the same spot
- Prepare soil — deep, good tilth, and nutrient rich
- Don't fertilize after September!

Cold Hardy Crops

Some crops, like kale, grow and can be eaten all winter long. Others grow during the summer and fall but then store in the ground—or your refrigerator—until you are ready to eat them. Some plants, like garlic, are planted in the fall but do not mature until the following growing season. By mixing and matching which plants you grow during the off-season, you can eat from the garden all year long!

Brassicas	Roots	Other
Collards	Beets*	Leeks
Brussels Sprouts	Carrots*	Chard
Kale	Parsnips*	Garlic
Broccoli (Purple Sprouting)	Turnips*	Potatoes*

*indicates 'storage' crops

Season Extension Tools and Techniques

Season extension is about protecting plants. Usually this is just done by warding off frost and cooler temperatures that prevent growth. However, some season extenders have additional benefits, like feeding the soil or keeping plants dry.

- Row Covers — A plastic material that allows light and water to penetrate, but provides a physical barrier to pests and warms the soil up a few degrees
- Cold Frames — Usually sedentary structures that protect plants from excessive cold and wet
- Cloches — Small, movable greenhouses over individual beds
- Mulches — Help regulate moisture, keep the soil warmer, suppress weeds, and build organic matter



Four Season Gardening & Harvesting

Oregon Tilth — Organic Education Center

Harvest Tips

- Harvest in the morning on warm days
- If wilted, dunk or rinse produce in cool water to revive it
- Indicators for harvest readiness (often used in combination to determine when a plant is at its peak quality):
 - Size – beets, cucumber, corn
 - Firmness – head lettuce, cabbage
 - Shape — compactness of florets (broccoli, cauliflower)
 - Texture — beans (snappy), peas (tender but full)
 - Color (winter squash, tomato)

Resources

- *What to Do in Winter* — Mother Earth News:
- <http://www.motherearthnews.com/Organic-Gardening/2007-10-01/Winter-Gardening.aspx>
- *The Maritime Northwest Garden Guide* — Seattle Tilth
- *Winter Gardening in the Maritime Northwest* — Binda Colebrook
- *Four-Season Harvest* and *The Winter Harvest Handbook* — Eliot Coleman
- *Gardening Under Cover: A Northwest Guide to Solar Greenhouses, Cold Frames, and Cloches* — William Head

Farmer Katie's Famous Kale Salad

Most people don't eat kale raw. If you're one of those people, get ready for a treat! This is a sure fire crowd-pleaser for any potluck or family dinner. It's even better after the first frost of the year, when the kale is at its peak flavor.

- 1 bunch kale (Any kind but our favorite is Winter Bor)
- 1/4 cup bread crumbs
- 1 bulb garlic, finely minced or crushed
- 1/4 cup finely grated pecorino cheese, more for garnish
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- Freshly squeezed juice of 1 lemon [optional - add some lemon zest]
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne powder
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1. Remove kale leaf from thickest portion of stem. Compost stem. Slice remaining leaves into 3/4-inch-wide ribbons (should be about 4 to 5 cups). Place kale in a large bowl.

2. Combine all other ingredients (excluding bread crumbs) into a small bowl and whisk together. Pour dressing over kale and use your hands to massage in well (dressing will be thick and need lots of work to coat leaves).

3. Let salad sit for 15 minutes (longer is better), then serve topped with bread crumbs and additional cheese.