

Hardiness of Cool Season Vegetables

By Charles W. Marr, Kansas State University



Most vegetable gardeners know that warm-season plants like tomatoes and beans are damaged by freezing weather and have been killed by earlier freezes this fall. But not all gardeners know the hardiness of the cool-season vegetable crops.

The following crops are considered "semi-hardy," which means they can withstand light frost: beets, Chinese cabbage,

collards, Irish potatoes, Bibb lettuce, mustard, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard and leaf lettuce. Semi-hardy vegetables should be harvested or protected if temperatures dip into the mid- to upper 20s. Gardeners who were able to sustain vegetables in this category by providing light cover are harvesting and enjoying them now.

"Hardy crops" include cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, carrots, turnips and kale. They can easily stand several good frosts. Harvest or protect hardy vegetable crops if temperatures in the low 20s seem imminent. Most of these survived our recent cold temperatures quite nicely. We've harvested an abundance of them lately.

Root crops such as beets, carrots, potatoes and turnips may also be mulched and used as needed until the soil begins to freeze, usually in late November to December.

For those crops that have been able to survive the early freezing temperatures, this has been a delightful autumn season for growth. Cool temperatures with bright sunny days and a few timely rains have kept the crops producing well. The only question now is how long will this last? Your guess is as good as mine. Watch the forecast. When temperatures drop to the low 20s to high teens, we will probably be done for the year.

Charles W. Marr is an Extension Horticulturist, Veg. Crops at K-State Research and Extension in Manhattan, Kansas. Marr contributes to the weekly electronic publication "Horticulture 2000," and helps to provide publication education of horticultural through his work at K-State.

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