

— Autumn garden guide —

Autumn in SA really is a great time for gardening.

Give high priority to planting out seeds or seedlings of winter vegetables along with cool season herbs.

If you wait too long, soil temperatures will start to fall and an early planting opportunity will pass you by.

The same advice applies for evergreen fruit trees like citrus and avocados, along with hibiscus, frangipani and other summer flowering ornamentals.



Vegetables for planting in autumn

Vegetable	Seed	Seedling	Between plant (cm)	Time to maturity (weeks)	Water	Degree of difficulty
Artichoke (Globe)	-	✓	75	25-30	•	•
Asparagus		Crowns late	40	Yearly	•	•
Beans - broad	✓ late#	-	20-25	18-20	••	••
Broccoli	✓	✓	45-60	10-14	••	••
Cabbage	✓	✓	40-60	8-12	••	••
Cauliflower	✓	✓	40-60	14-18	••	•••
Celery	-	✓	20-30	18-20	••	•••
Garlic	✓	✓	8-10	20-30	••	•
Lettuce - hearting	✓	✓	25-30	8-10	•••	•••
Lettuce - non hearting	✓	✓	12-15	6-8	•••	••
Onions - white	✓	Mid/late	8-10	20-32	••	••
Pea	✓	✓	8-10	12-16	••	••
Radish*	✓	-	5	6-8	••	•
Rhubarb		Crowns late	40-60	40-50	••	•
Silverbeet	✓	✓	20-30	8-12	••	•

* seed only # dwarf or mini preferred • low water ••• high water • easy ••• high

Aphids are arriving

Sap-sucking insects, particularly aphids, are starting to cause problems in many gardens, but so too are nature's predators. Don't spray with an insecticide as the predators should keep them under control. If insect numbers start to build rapidly, try squirting them with water or repelling with a garlic spray. If you must spray, use a horticultural oil such as pest oil or eco oil.

Trapping codling moths

These pests of apples and pears are hard to control. However, they will be entering an over-wintering stage in the next few weeks with the grubs seeking shelter in bark or crevices near their host trees. Provide a trap for them by placing cardboard around the trunk and main branches. The traps can be removed early in winter and the insects destroyed.

Trench trees soon

Planning to move a small tree or shrub during winter? Its chance of survival will be increased significantly if the roots are trenched or cut with a spade 40-50cm from the base of the plant. Trenching early in autumn will allow new roots to form closer to the plant's main trunk.

Indoor plants

Hanging baskets that have been in a shady position during summer will appreciate a bath in a weak solution of liquid fertiliser. Consider rehanging them in a sunnier spot but remember, shaded plants will suffer leaf burn if exposed to too much sun too quickly.

Sow that lawn

March is a good time to sow lawn seed, but don't be in a hurry. Your results will be much better if you take the opportunity to improve the soil first. Once the area is level, water the soil and germinate a crop of weeds. The more weeds you kill before you sow, the better.

Try growing your own herbs

At this time of the year, you will find an extensive range of herbs at your local garden centre.



Herb	Size	Comment
Basil sweet	30-50 x 40	Plant in full sun and don't overwater.
Chives	15 x 15	Sun lovers that tolerate semi shade. Keep well watered in warm weather. Easy to grow from seed or seedlings.
Coriander	40-50 x 25-40	Autumn grown plants are less likely to run to seed. Don't let plants become dry.
Mint	40 x 30	Big range of flavours worth trying. Best container grown as plants can become invasive in the garden.
Oregano	60 x 40	Very easy to grow. Many different flavours. Sun lover. Trim often if plants not being harvested regularly.
Parsley	20 x 20	Many interesting types worth growing. Excellent as a container plant. Grow in full sun through winter.
Rosemary	0.4-1.5 x 0.5-1.5	Attractive shrub but needs full sun. Resents wet feet.
Sage	30-50 x 30-40	Easy to grow. Very useful. Sometimes short-lived. Must have good drainage.
Thyme	20-30 x 20-30	Leaves have a very strong flavour. Big range of forms. Needs full sun and well drained position.



Autumn pest watch

Insect	Favourite foods	Control options
Aphids	Soft tip growth, roses and vegetables	Use horticultural oil or soap based spray
Caterpillars	Soft new leaves on vegetables and ornamentals	Spray with non toxic Dipel
Cherry slug	Leaves on cherry, pear and quince	Spray when present with non toxic Success Ultra
Codling moth	Apples, pears, fruits	Spray during season with Success Ultra
Earwig	Small insects and eggs, sometimes soft plant tissue	Trap in trays containing vegetable oil
Leaf minor	New leaves on citrus	Spray when first noticed with horticultural oil
Mealy bugs	Houseplants and plants in containers	Spray foliage and drench roots with Conguard or Confidor
Millipedes	Decaying plant material	Reduce numbers by trapping
Mites	Tomatoes, roses	Spray foliage with wettable sulphur or Natrasoap
Scale	Roses, citrus, oleanders and others	Spray foliage and drench roots with Conguard or Confidor
Slugs/snails	Seedlings, new leaf growth	Trap or use pet friendly bait
Weevils	Roses and many ornamental shrubs	Spray foliage and under canopy with Baythroid
White fly	Vegetable and soft leaf shrubs growing in the shade	Spray pest oil or eco oil and repeat two weeks later

For quick winter colour

In many parts of South Australia, it's possible to encourage spring flowering annuals to flower through winter - thanks to our relatively mild climate. Start planting seedlings soon and make sure the plants are well established before winter begins.

	Con-tainer	Distance apart (cm)	Height (cm)	Sun	Semi Shade	Cuttings
Alyssum	•	15	10	•	•	
Begonias	•	15	20		•	
Dianthus	•	30	30	•	•	•
Linaria	•	15	30	•		
Lobelia	•	20	15	•	•	
Marigold	•	25	40	•		
Nemesia	•	25	30	•		
Pansy	•	20	20	•	•	
Poppy	•	15	40	•	•	•
Primula	•	20	30	•	•	
Snapdragon – tall		30	60	•		•
Snapdragon – dwarf	•	25	30	•	•	
Viola	•	15	15	•	•	
Wallflower	•	25	30	•		

Plant spring flowering bulbs early

Where spring flowering bulbs are concerned, plant early - if possible before the middle of April. Late planted bulbs will still flower well but in South Australia their performance is often cut short by a sudden burst of warm spring weather.

	Depth (cm)	Distance apart (cm)	Tolerates some shade	Cutting
Anemone	3	15		•
Amaryllis	*			-
Babiana	5	7		•
Brunsvigia	*			-
Cyclamen	*		√	-
Daffodils (Jonquils)	12	15	√	•
Dutch Iris	10	15		•
Freesias	7	7	√	•
Grape Hyacinths	7	8	√	
Hyacinth	15	15		•
Ixias	7	10		•
Lachenalia	7	10		•
Ranunculus	3	15		•
Spraxis	7	10		•
Scilla (Blue Bells)	7	10	√	•
Triteleia	7	10		•
Tulips	12	12	√	•
* Neck or top of corm exposed				

Vegetables

Keep continuous cropping vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchinis, capsicums and eggfruit producing by harvesting the fruits just before they are fully mature. This will stimulate the plants into further flowering cycles.

Tomatoes

Before removing spent tomato bushes, check their roots for signs of nematodes. If there are large numbers of small galls along the roots, tomatoes should not be planted in that spot next year.

Compost

Autumn leaves make excellent compost. Weeds, lawn clippings, spent vegetable plants and any surplus organic material can be turned into compost. Put the material in a heap. Add a little soil as the heap grows.

Try these sub-tropical fruits

Why not try growing your own?

The range is quite extensive and early autumn is the right time to get growing.



Fruit	Height (m)	Con-tainer	Comment
Avocado	4-5	-	Buy selected grafted varieties
Banana	3-4	-	Like it hot with plenty of water
Citrus*	3-4	•	Need full sun and good drainage
Feijoa	3-5	•	Easy one established
Guava	1.5-4	•	Look for improved varieties
Mango	3-5	-	Need warm protected position
Passionfruit	3-4 wide	-	Don't over fertilise, short lived
Tamarillo	1.5-3	•	Like it hot with well drained soil
* Citrus includes oranges, lemons, grapefruits, mandarins and limes.			