

# Fall into Healthy Habits & Start a Vegetable Garden

Challenge yourself this fall—get active and start a fall vegetable garden. Growing your own garden is an easy way to get fresh air and exercise, and a good way to eat healthy while saving money.

## Planning

Before you start, pick what kinds of vegetables you'll grow and where you'll grow them. **Select a spot for your garden that is close to the house**, near a source of water, and in an area that gets at least six hours of sunlight a day.

## Preparing

There are many types of soil in Florida, and it's usually best to **improve your dirt by adding organic matter** (such as compost or peat moss). Loosen your soil with a spade or gardening hoe a few weeks before you begin planting. When it's time to plant, rake the soil until the surface is smooth.

## Irrigation & Drainage

How often you should water your garden depends on your soil type and the age of your plants. Young plants should be watered regularly, in small amounts. Older vegetables need larger amounts of water less regularly. Sandy soils require water more often than clay-based soils. If the ground around your plants doesn't keep water well, make ring shaped mounds around the bases to make sure water is fully absorbed. **Cover the inside of the mounds with mulch (pine straw, shredded bark, grass clippings) to help conserve moisture.**



## Harvesting

Many vegetables can be harvested at different stages. Leaf lettuce, for example, can be picked as young as you like; snip some leaves, and it will continue to grow. Summer squash (zucchini) and cucumber can be harvested when the fruit is just a few inches long, or it can be allowed to grow to full size. **The general rule: If it looks good enough to eat, it probably is.** With many vegetables, the more you pick, the more the plant will produce.



< Learn more about which vegetables grow best in Florida.



## Pests & Diseases

**Pests and diseases are ongoing problems for most vegetable gardeners. Although some problems may require special solutions, there are some general guidelines you can follow.**

**Deer and rabbits.** Fence in your garden to stop deer and rabbits from eating your vegetables. The bottom of the fence should extend about 6 inches under the soil and the top should stand at least 8 feet tall. This will stop rabbits from digging under and deer from jumping over.

**Insects.** Row covers, which are lightweight sheets of clear plastic, protect young crops against many common insects. Row covers are also helpful to prevent damage from light frosts. Wear gardening gloves to pick larger insects off by hand.

**Fungal diseases.** Reduce fungal diseases by watering the soil, not the leaves of plants. If you use a sprinkler, do it early in the day so the leaves will dry by nightfall.

**Remove diseased plants.** If a plant falls to a disease, remove it promptly and throw it in the trash; don't add sick plants to your compost pile.

**Grow disease-resistant varieties.** Check garden catalogs and websites for varieties that offer the most protection.

**Change the location of your plants each year.** For example, if you grew tomatoes in the northwest corner of your garden this year, put them in the northeast corner next year. This reduces the chance of pests sticking around your garden.



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## Mashed Spiced Carrots

### Serves 4

- 3 ½ cups sliced carrots (¼-inch thick)
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 dash ground cinnamon

1. Steam carrots in pan for 20 minutes or until very tender. Drain.
2. Put the carrots in a bowl and add the other ingredients.
3. Mash until the desired consistency is reached. Serve.

## Hummus & Radish Stuffed Pitas

### Serves 8

- 1 8-ounce container hummus
- 4 6-inch whole-wheat pitas, halved
- 4 green leaf lettuce leaves, halved
- 1 ¼ cups cucumber, thinly sliced
- ¾ cup radishes, thinly sliced
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese

1. Divide hummus mixture evenly among eight pita halves, about 1 ½ tablespoons each.
2. Divide lettuce, cucumber, radishes and cheese evenly among pita halves. Enjoy!

## Carrot & Lettuce Salad

### Serves 5

- 1 cup carrots, shredded
- 5 leaves lettuce
- ¼ cup raisins
- 1 cup vanilla low-fat yogurt

1. Combine all ingredients except lettuce leaves in a mixing bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes.
2. Toss again before serving. Serve on lettuce leaf.

Recipes from [FreshFromFlorida.com](http://FreshFromFlorida.com)

# HEALTHY

## Fall Gardening

Vegetables can be grown year-round in Florida, but some types do better than others during the fall season.



Carrots



Cabbage



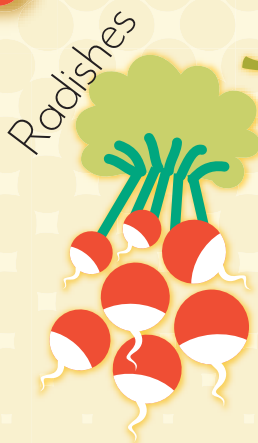
Beets



Corn



Kale



Radishes



Onions



Lettuce



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