



How to grow some veg for the winter A short introduction

Introduction

It's obvious: anything that will grow outside in the winter will grow in the greenhouse or polytunnel.

Some things will grow better in the greenhouse because of the wind protection.

The unheated greenhouse *may* give *some* protection, *some of the time* from the cold. It's easier to add additional protection (horticultural fleece, bubblewrap, straw etc) in the controlled environment of the greenhouse.

In fact, some things grow better at this time of year because they're less likely to bolt.

Timing is tricky. Sow too early and they may seed before the winter. Sow too late and they may not germinate or not grow on because of reducing light levels. We succession sow from July onwards to try to get the timing right by 'bracketing'. And we plant some in the polytunnel and some outside for the same reason.

Things to grow

Lettuces - the ones that sound like they'd do OK.

- 'Winter' Density/Gem
- Arctic King
- All The Year Round

Chenopods

- Chards: green/coloured
- Beetroots
- Spinach/perpetual spinach

With all these, if they throw up a seed head, then just cut off and they'll resprout.

Herbs

- Parsley
- Coriander
- Chervil

Leaves

- Land cress (sometimes called American cress)

- Corn salad/lamb's lettuce/maché
- Salad rocket/wild rocket
- Chicories
- Mustards: red/golden/green
- Pak choi
- Chinese leaves
- Mibuna
- Mizuna
- Mustards
- Saladinis
- Endives
- Leaf radish
- Kale
- Turnips (for tops)
- Radicchio
- Orach

Other stuff

- Peas (for shoots, yummy in salads)
- Peas and broad beans- for an early start to go outside in spring
- Carrots - for an early crop
- Spring onions - White Lisbon Winter Hardy
- Florence fennel
- Radishes

Also worth letting a good selection of your brassicas go to shoots/seed because they are very tasty and the bees get early nectar. See [my article for Emma Cooper](#) with recipes too.

Potential problems

The usual culprits like your slugs and snails. Use beer traps and/or iron phosphate pellets (organic permitted).

Leatherjackets: if daddy long legs have laid eggs in soil during autumn. You can control them using nematodes.

Temperature control depending on local conditions (eg frost hollow) and light levels depending on aspect and shade.

Water shouldn't be a problem as long as you do check weekly. As long as they have a good soak, they should be ok. AND, if you're getting useful and tasty stuff you are likely to be in there more often than weekly so you can have fresh produce.

Books and web resources

Charles Dowding

A fascinating man. Loads of useful information at his [web site](#).

His books are [Salad Leaves for All Seasons](#) and [Organic Gardening The Natural No-Dig Way](#). I highly recommend them both. Sensible practical advice on how to and what to plant. He's done it and knows his stuff. He's done a [winter veg book](#) which I don't yet have.

Eliot Coleman

He's American and writes from this experience plus some in France. I have his book: [Four Season Harvest](#). It's a good read with some good ideas. Probably more than you want and not as instantly useful as Dowding's books - worth a peek from the library.

I see also that he's since done [The Winter Harvest Handbook: Year-round Vegetable Production Using Deep-organic Techniques and Unheated Greenhouses](#)

Seeds of Italy

Run by a friendly man called Paolo Arrigo - I have a signed [recipe book](#) of his and have spoken to him. A great family run firm.

His [web site](#) always has a What to Plant Now? bit to it. If you sign up for emails you'll get a detailed summary. Well worth taking up.

Good luck let me know how you get on