The Sprout

A Publication of the Calimesa Community Garden

Fall Is the Community Garden's Best-Kept Secret

Summer gets all the glory, but fall is when the community garden gets *interesting*.

The air cools and digging in the dirt feels like a treat again.

The Cool-Season Comeback

While summer crops limp to the finish line, kale, spinach, lettuce, radishes, and garlic are just warming up. Many greens actually taste sweeter after a light frost — the plant packs in extra sugars to protect itself. Frost is basically nature's seasoning.

Garlic is the sleeper hit: tuck cloves in now, walk away for winter, and next summer you're a garlic farmer. Minimal effort, maximum smugness.

Cleanup With a Purpose

Fall cleanup isn't a chore, it's a plot twist setup. Pull spent plants, turn the compost, mulch the beds — and leave a few seed heads standing for the birds, who'll repay you by eating the bugs you don't want.

Quick Fall To-Do List

Plant—garlic, spinach, and kale

Mulch—beds for winter

Compost—the healthy leftovers

Chat—with your garden neighbors

Fall isn't a wind-down — it's a whole second season hiding in plain sight.

Grab a sweater and go see what your plot has left to give.

Sharon Miller

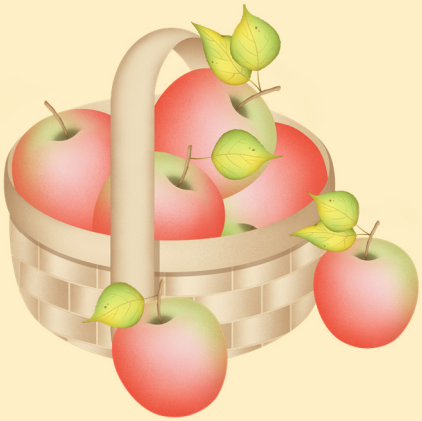
&

Debra Grzeskowiak

The Calimesa Community Garden Membership extends their gratitude and appreciation for your years of service on the CCG Board.

Thank You!

Calimesa Community Garden



LOCATION

371 W. Avenue L
Calimesa, CA 92320
Visit us online at:
calimesacommunitygarden.org

In need of help ?
Leaving on vacation?
Have any questions?

Please, reach out to the CCG Board at:
ccg92320@yahoo.com

CCG BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Save Water, Beat the Weeds!

Why It's Time to Try the Waffle Garden Method

If you've spent a summer afternoon dragging a hose across the plot, or an evening pulling weeds you swear weren't there yesterday, you already know the two biggest headaches of community gardening: water and weeds. There's a centuries-old growing technique that tackles both at once, and it's simpler than it sounds.

It's called the Waffle Garden Method.

We are encouraging every gardener in our community plots to consider giving it a try.

What Is a Waffle Garden?

The Waffle Garden gets its name from its shape: instead of flat rows or raised mounds, the soil is formed into a grid of shallow, sunken squares separated by low earthen walls or ridges — just like the pockets in a waffle. Each square becomes its own mini basin for a plant or small cluster of plants.

It's a traditional technique used for generations by the Zuni people in the arid Southwest, developed to make every drop of water count in a dry climate. If it can keep crops alive in the desert, it can help your garden get through a hot, dry week.

continued . . .

Help Save Water & Prevent Flooding

The Waffle Garden Method *continued –*

Why It Conserves Water

- **Traditional flat garden beds** lose a lot of water to runoff and evaporation. Water hits the surface, spreads out (sometimes flooding pathways), and either rolls away or dries up before it ever reaches the roots. The waffle design solves this in a few key ways:
- **Water stays put.** The sunken squares act like little basins, holding water right where you pour it instead of letting it run off to the pathways.
- **Water goes down, not sideways.** Because each square—or rectangle—is contained, the water is forced to soak downward toward the root zone instead of spreading across the surface and evaporating.
- **You apply less water.** Often watering less frequently with less water overall. A big win during summer watering restrictions **and on the water bill.**

Why It Cuts Down on Weeds

The waffle shape pairs perfectly with a layer of mulch, which together is a serious weed deterrent.

- **Mulch fills the pockets.** A layer of straw, hay, wood chips, or shredded leaves spread across, helps block the sunlight from reaching weed seeds, so they never get the light they need to sprout.
- **Mulch locks in the moisture the waffle shape captures.** The mulch layer acts like a lid, keeping the soil beneath it damp for longer, and reducing how often you need to water.
- **Fewer bare, exposed edges.** The raised ridges between squares leave weeds very little open soil to colonize.

Leaving you more
time to enjoy your garden!

The CCG sits in an inland Zone 9 garden region that is dry and hot—careful watering is essential.

Just like Eggos—your waffle cells do not have to be square!

How To Build a Waffle Garden

Helpful Tools: Preferably a square nose shovel or hoe, and an iron bow rake.

- Clear grass and debris, and rough out the overall garden footprint —
- Prepare the soil by adding compost and leaf mulch. This will help with both water retention and soil health.
- Within the chosen area, mark out your "waffle" or grid using the edge of your square nose shovel, or your rake .

  Size each waffle cell according to what you will grow there. A tomato or pepper plant cell should be approximately 1-2 feet wide and long. A set of 4 cabbages might be in a 2.5' x 2.5' cell, carrots might be in 1' x 2' cell, swiss chard perhaps in a 1' x 3'. Size can be adjusted according to what the vegetable type is — and how much you want to be able to harvest in one picking.
- Within each marked square, dig down 4 to 6 inches, piling the removed soil along the cell edges rather than hauling it away, and pat down well. This soil becomes your berm wall.
- You are ready to plant!
- Watering — Fill each sunken cell directly with water rather than spraying from above, which can knock down the walls. The berm wall keeps water contained right at the roots instead of running off — which is the whole point of the design.

That's the core method — sunken cells surrounded by raised soil walls to trap water at the roots. It works especially well in hot, dry climates like ours in Southern California, since you'll water less often than with a flat bed. Corn, beans, squash, and chiles are classic choices for the cells, but any veggie that likes consistent moisture will do well.

Don't forget the mulch!

Fall is still warm in Zone 9–mulching will continue to decrease water needs while suppressing weeds.

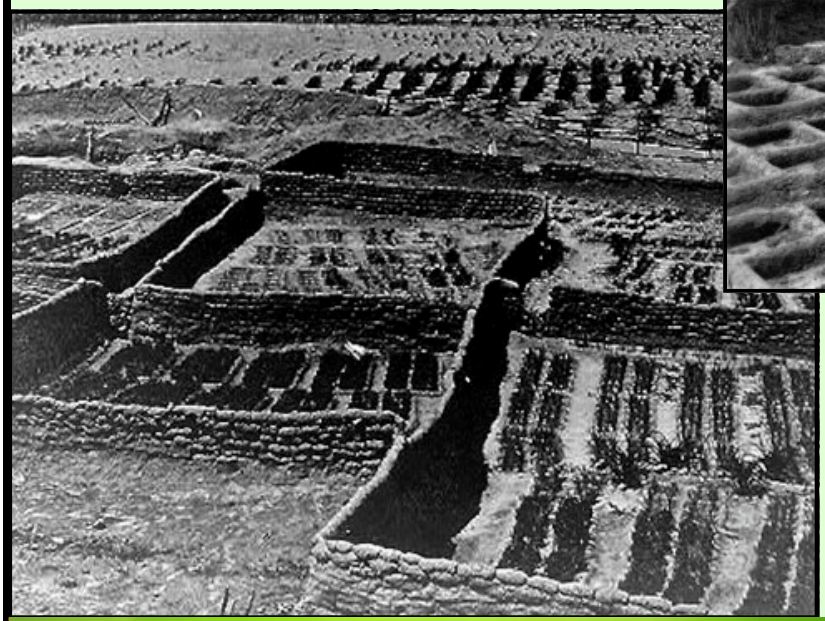
In spring, don't mulch too early as the mulch will slow the ground warming up.

Water is costly – mulching can reduce water needs by 30% to 60%.

Water does not resist – it flows.

Let's keep it around our plants – not in the pathways.

Historical Photos
of Waffle Gardening



Indigenous people often had to carry their water – so every drop was precious.

Growing Corn In Waffles Works Well—

It was one of the traditional Zuni staples grown this way.

(often alongside beans and squash (the "three sisters").

A Few Tips

→ Bed size: Corn needs more room, so corn cells are often made larger than the standard 2–3 ft squares — sometimes 4–5 ft square — or 3 — 6 ft rectangles to fit a cluster of stalks. Corn is wind-pollinated, so planting in blocks rather than single rows allows better pollination.

→ Depth: Keep the sunken depth similar (4–6 in). Corn's fibrous roots benefit from that pooled moisture, especially when tasseling and water demand spikes — mulching will help more.

→ Berm strength: Build slightly wider, sturdier berms around corn cells — to hold their shape through the season.

→ Timing your mulching: Wait until the corn plants are about a foot tall — then put in your mulch.

How You Can Help Conserve Water

Keep Water From Flowing Out Of Your Plot & Into Pathways.

Water is our biggest expense !

Centering On Organics

Series — Part 2

Understanding Soil Structure

A Beginner's Guide

Soil **texture** is what your soil is made of (sand/silt/clay ratio) — it's fixed. Soil **structure** is how those particles clump together and the pore spaces between them — and it's highly changeable through how you manage your garden.

The Three Particle Types

Particle	Drainage	Holds Nutrients	Compaction Risk
Sand	Fast	Poor	Low
Silt	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Clay	Slow	Good	High
Loam (balanced)	Balanced	Good	Low

Quick test: Squeeze moist soil into a ball, then ribbon it between your fingers. Falls apart = sandy. Short ribbon = loam. Long, pliable ribbon = clay.

CCG is mainly clay type

Why Structure Matters

Function	Good Structure	Poor Structure
Water	Drains excess, retains the rest	Waterlogs or runs off
Air	Reaches roots & microbes	Roots/microbes suffocate
Roots	Grow deep and strong	Shallow, stunted
Nutrients	Cycle actively	Lock up, decompose slowly

Centering On Organics . . . continued

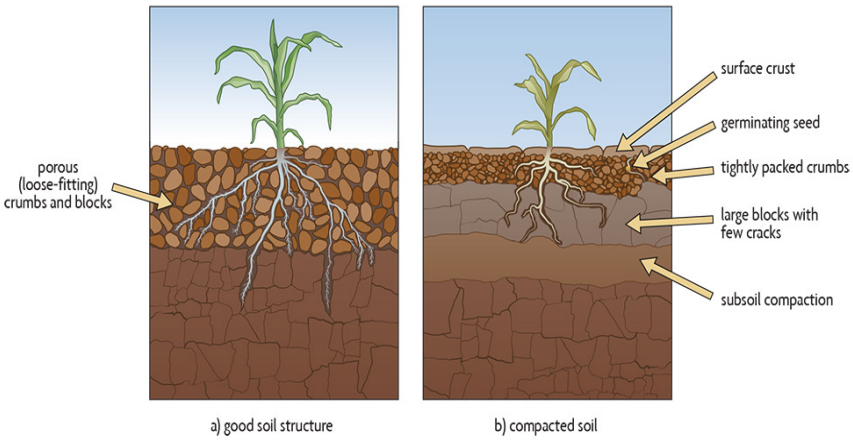
What Damages Soil Structure?

→ Compaction
(foot traffic, equipment, working wet soil)

→ Frequent tilling (breaks fungal networks)

→ Bare, uncovered soil

→ Low organic matter



How to Build It

Action	Why
Add compost (1–2"/year)	Feeds microbes; fungi produce natural "glue" binding particles
Reduce tilling	Preserves fungal networks and aggregates
Mulch beds	Protects surface, retains moisture, feeds soil as it breaks down
Grow cover crops	Roots naturally aerate and build structure
Protect earthworms	Skip pesticides; keep soil consistently moist
Avoid working wet soil	Prevents compaction

Signs It's Improving

Crumbly texture • Visible earthworms • Water absorbs in seconds • Deep roots • Earthy smell

Yearly Routine

Season	Action
Spring	Add compost, skip tilling
Growing season	Mulch, water deeply but less often
Fall	Plant cover crops or add leaves
Winter	Let mulch break down, stay off beds

Bottom line

Feed it, disturb it less, keep it covered. Structure builds itself from there.

Healthy soil structure isn't built overnight — it takes a cumulative result of consistent good practices, feed it organic matter, disturb it as little as possible, and keep it covered.

Cultivating Facts On Sweet Potatoes

- In 2000, Americans ate about 4 pounds of sweet potatoes per person. Today, it's nearly double that, at 7.5 pounds per person.
- Sweet potatoes come in many different colors like orange, white, yellow, red and purple. The taste, texture, flavor, and nutritional content differs among the varieties. Orange sweet potatoes are the sweetest of them all.
- George Washington Carver, working in the early part of the twentieth century, developed 118 different products from the sweet potato, including dyes, candies, molasses, wood filler, and library paste!
- Sweet potatoes are North Carolina's official state vegetable. This state is also the leading producer of sweet potatoes in the U.S.
- Sweet potatoes are a favorite holiday dish in the South, and Mississippi plants over 20,000 acres of sweet potatoes each year.
- Where did they come from? Believe it or not, sweet potatoes are native to the tropical Americas and were first cultivated there at least 5,000 years ago.
- Sweet potatoes' leaves can improve soil health. The leaves from sweet potatoes can be used in compost or mulch to help improve the quality of soil and to help suppress weed growth.
- The largest sweet potato festival in the U.S. is held in Vardaman, Mississippi, often recognized as the sweet potato capital of the world. Pie-eating contests, cooking competitions, arts and crafts and more grace the Mississippi city for the entire first week of November.

Despite a physical similarity and a frequent confusion with their names, yams and sweet potatoes are not even distantly related. They are in two different botanical families. Yams are actually related to grasses and lilies .

The Best Sweet Potato Biscuits

Mellow sweet potato purée makes these colorful biscuits tender, moist, and light.

Cook Time: 25 mins. Cool: 5 mins. Yield: approx. 14 biscuits

Ingredients

- **9 ounces all-purpose flour (about 2 cups)**
- **1 tablespoon baking powder**
- **1/2 teaspoon baking soda**
- **2 teaspoons fine kosher salt**
- **4 ounces cold, unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes**
- **9 ounces sweet potato purée, from one large sweet potato**
- **3 ounces milk, any percentage will do (about 1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon)**

Directions

1. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and preheat to 400°F. Should your kitchen be warmer than 75° F, please see our guide to baking in a hot kitchen before getting started; the specifics are focused on pie dough, but the overall principles are true of biscuits as well.

2. Sift flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt into a medium bowl, then whisk until well combined (this may take up to 1 minute). Add the butter, toss to break up the pieces, and smash each cube flat. Continue smashing and rubbing until the butter has mostly disappeared into a floury mix, although a few larger, Cheerio-sized pieces may remain. This can also be done with 4 or 5 pulses in a food processor, just take care not to overdo it. The prepared mix can be refrigerated up to 3 weeks in an airtight container, then used as directed below.

3. Mash the sweet potato purée and milk together with a fork, or combine with an immersion blender until perfectly smooth. Add to the dry mix in a large bowl, and fold with a flexible spatula until fully absorbed. The dough will seem rather crumbly and dry at first, but keep mixing until it finally comes together. Once the dough forms a rough ball, turn out onto a lightly floured surface.

4. With your bare hands, gently pat the dough into a squarish shape about 1/2-inch thick, then fold in half; repeat twice more for a total of 3 folds, using only enough flour to keep your hands from sticking. Finish by patting the dough to a thickness of 3/4 inch. If needed, dust away any excess flour, then cut into 1 3/4-inch rounds and arrange in a 10-inch cast iron skillet. Gather scraps into a ball, pat and fold a single time, then cut as many more biscuits as you can. The final round of scraps can be gathered and shaped into a single biscuit by hand.

5. Bake until the biscuits are well-risen and golden brown, about 25 minutes (or longer if cut thicker than 3/4 -inch). Let the biscuits cool about 5 minutes to help set their crumb, then serve as desired, whether alongside soups and stews or split for shortcake or breakfast sandwiches. Leftovers can be stored up to a week in an airtight container; to serve, split the stale biscuits in half, brush with melted butter, arrange on a baking sheet, and broil until golden brown, then serve with jam.

Above recipe from serious eats

Sweet Potato Stew With Chickpeas & Hardy Greens

This autumnal stew is warming and cozy, ready in under 30 minutes, and layered with rich, vivid flavors

Cook Time: 25 mins. Prep Time: 5 mins. Serves: 4 to 6

Ingredients

- 4 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 yellow onion, finely chopped
- 2 pounds sweet potatoes (about 2 large-3 small), peel & chop into 3/4-inch chunks
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon Aleppo pepper or 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 4 cups chicken broth or stock, homemade or low-sodium store-bought
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce, or to taste
- 1 15.5-ounce can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 3 cup to 4 cups (packed) kale, Swiss chard, collard or turnip greens, or mature (not baby) spinach
- 1 tablespoon lime juice, plus the finely grated zest, from 1 lime
- 3 tablespoons to 4 tablespoons plain hummus, homemade or store-bought

Directions

1. Heat butter in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add onion and cook for about 5 minutes until softened. Add sweet potatoes, 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, and Aleppo pepper. Cook for another 5 minutes (stirring occasionally), or until the outsides lose their firmness.
2. Add maple syrup, stirring so it evenly coats the sweet potatoes. Cook for 1 to 2 more minutes, stirring constantly, to lightly caramelize the syrup.
3. Add broth, soy sauce, chickpeas, greens, and lime zest. Simmer gently for about 15 minutes, or until the sweet potatoes are tender.
4. Lower heat, and stir in the lime juice and hummus, starting with 3 tablespoons hummus; stir until well integrated. Taste, and add another tablespoon of hummus, if desired, for extra richness and body. Taste for seasoning and balance, adding a bit more soy, lime juice, and/or salt to your liking. Turn off the heat. Divide the stew amongst bowls, and serve right away. (Any leftovers will keep well, tightly covered, for several days in the refrigerator. Reheat before serving.)

Recipe from food52.com

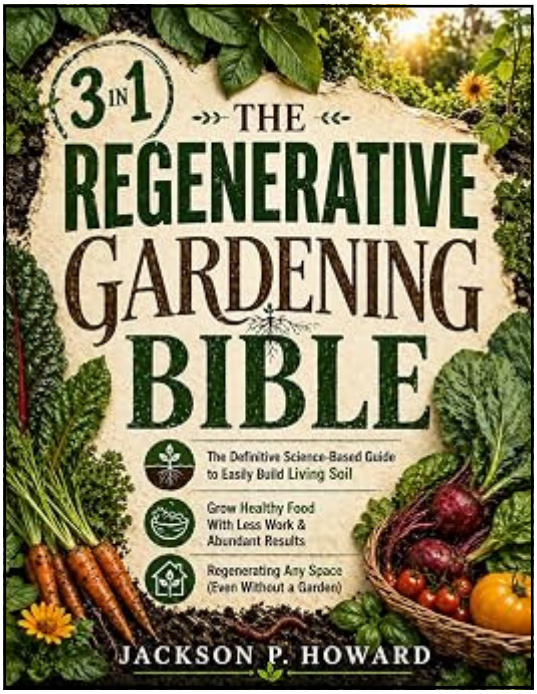
A Gardener's Bookshelf

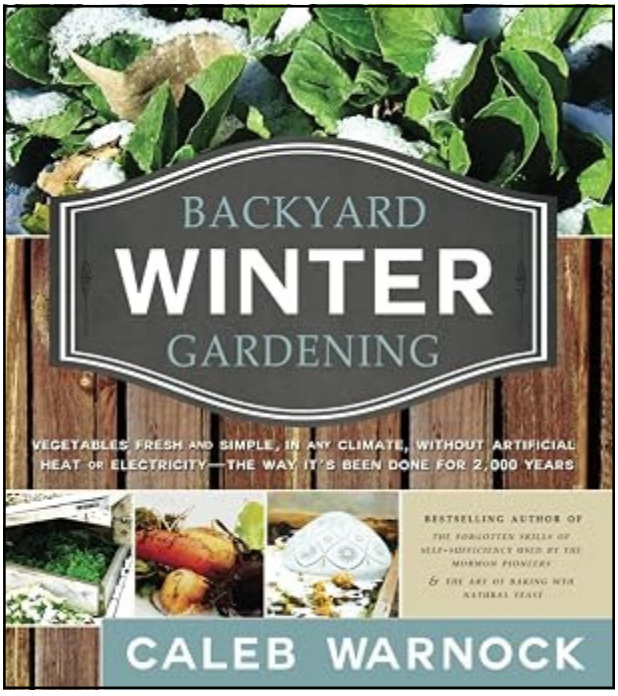
A good gardening library can be one of your best tools.
This space is for sharing books to consider on gardening and plants.

The Regenerative Gardening Bible: The Definitive Science-Based Guide to Easily Build Living Soil, Grow Healthy Food With Less Work & Regenerating Any Space (Even Without a Garden), by author Jackson P. Howard.

With regenerative gardening, you'll learn how to build living soil, strengthen plant resilience, and create a garden that improves with every season instead of exhausting you.

Discover how to regenerate your soil in any space, even the smallest one.





By author Caleb Warnock. Backyard Winter Gardening: Vegetables Fresh and Simple, in Any Climate Without Artificial Heat or Electricity the Way It's Been Done for 2,000 Years.

Without fresh, all-natural winter gardening in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries people would have starved to death. The good news is that feeding your family fresh food from your own backyard garden all winter long is far easier and less time-consuming than you might imagine. And you won't find better-tasting food at any price!

Be A Good Neighbor

- ♥ **Chop up large plants to help make more room in the bins.**
- ♥ **Check all faucets are off when leaving the garden.**
- ♥ **Before removing any items from other plots — including vacant ones, first obtain permission from the Board.**
- ♥ **Please leave hoses wound up neatly & mostly mud free. :)**

As long as autumn lasts,
I shall not have hands, canvas
and colours enough to paint the
beautiful things I see –

Vincent Van Gogh

PLANTING CALENDAR — Please Read Notes First

⇒ **This calendar is for use as a general guideline.**

⇒ **Even the various garden books do not agree on all their recommended planting times.**

⇒ **Bear in mind, are you planting an early, or a late-bearing variety? Timing of planting and particular varieties are important factors, as well as, considering if are you planting seeds, or already started seedlings.**

⇒ **Nature loves to keep us guessing with earlier than normal winters or longer than normal summers!**

⇒ **Enjoy and expect the unexpected!**

January

Asparagus, Asian Greens, Beets, Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Celery, Swiss Chard, Endive, Escarole, Garlic, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mustard, Bunching Onions, Short Day Onions, Parsley, Peas, Potatoes, Radishes, Rhubarb, Rutabagas, Spinach, Turnips

February

Asparagus, Asian Greens, Beets, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Swiss Chard, Endive, Escarole, Fava Bean, Garlic, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mustard, Bunching Onions, Short Day Onions, Parsley, Peas, Potatoes, Radishes, Rhubarb, Rutabaga, Spinach, Strawberries, Turnips

March

Artichoke, Asparagus, Asian Greens, Beets, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Swiss Chard, Endive, Escarole, Fava Bean, Garlic, Herbs, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mustard, Bunching Onions, Short Day Onions, Parsley, Peas, Potatoes, Radishes, Rutabagas, Spinach, Strawberries, Turnips

April

Beets, Carrots, Corn, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Fava Bean, Garlic, Herbs, Lima Beans, Leeks, Lettuce, Melons, Okra, Onions, Parsley, Peas, Peppers, Potatoes, Radishes, Short Day Onions, Squashes, Strawberries

May

Beets, Carrots, Corn, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Herbs, Lima Beans, Leeks, Lettuce, Melons, Okra, Onions, Parsley, Peas, Peppers, Pumpkins, Radishes, Short Day Onions, Squashes, Swiss Chard, Tomatoes, Turnips

June

Beets, Corn, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Herbs, Lima Beans, Leeks, Melons, Okra, Peppers, Pumpkins, Squashes, Tomatoes, Turnips

July

Beets, Carrots, Corn, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Melons, Peppers, Squash, Tomatoes

August

Asian Greens, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cucumber, Kale, Leeks, Shallots, Onions

September

Asian Greens, Brussels Sprouts, Carrots, Cauliflower, Fennel, Garlic, Kale, Leeks, Lettuce, Onion sets, Peas, Potatoes, Radishes, Rutabagas, Spinach, Squashes, Swiss Chard, Turnips

October

Asparagus, Asian Greens, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Swiss Chard, Endive, Escarole, Fava Bean, Fennel, Garlic, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mustard, Bunching Onions, Onion sets, Short Day Onions, Parsley, Parsnips, Peas, Radishes, Rutabagas, Spinach, Swiss Chard, Turnips

November

Asparagus, Asian Greens, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Swiss Chard, Endive, Escarole, Fava Bean, Fennel, Garlic, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mustard, Bunching Onions, Short Day Onions, Parsley, Parsnips, Peas, Radishes, Strawberries, Rhubarb, Rutabagas, Turnips

December

Asparagus, Asian Greens, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Celery, Swiss Chard, Endive, Escarole, Garlic, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mustard, Bunching Onions, Short Day Onions, Parsley, Peas, Potatoes, Radishes, Rhubarb, Rutabagas, Spinach, Strawberries, Turnips