

# What To Plant And Do In the Food Garden In OCTOBER

By John Ditchburn (Ditchy), The Backyard Food Gardener [www.urbanfoodgarden.org](http://www.urbanfoodgarden.org)

WHAT TO PLANT IN OCTOBER (mild coastal and warm inland) *		
FROM SEED	FROM SEEDLING	IN SEEDLING BOXES #
BEANS - climbing	BROCCOLI <sup>X</sup>	<u>BASIL</u> & BASIL
BEANS - bush	CABBAGE <sup>X</sup>	BROCCOLI
BEETROOT	CORN <sup>1</sup>	CABBAGE
CARROT	KALE <sup>X</sup>	<u>CAPSICUM</u> & CAPSICUM
CORN	LETTUCE	CELERY
CUCUMBER	PAK CHOI <sup>1</sup>	CORN <sup>1</sup>
PAK CHOI	CELERY	<u>EGGPLANT</u> & EGGPLANT
PARSNIP	TOMATO	<u>CHILLI</u> & CHILLI
POTATOES		KALE
PUMPKIN		LEEK
ROCKET		LETTUCE
SUNFLOWER		PAK CHOI <sup>1</sup>
SPRING ONION		SILVERBEET
TURNIP		TOMATO
ZUCCHINI		

\* Key vegetables only, not all vegetables that can be planted at this time are listed. # Sow in seedling boxes for planting out in four to six weeks time. 1 Best sown in single cell seedling trays as these seedlings don't like their roots being disturbed when transplanted. X Prone to cabbage butterfly damage when planted this time of year. (Parenthesis) Grow in a permanent greenhouse or temporary polytunnel that is removed when the weather has warmed up. DOUBLE UNDERLINED Grow in glass/plastic covered seedling box. RED DOUBLE UNDERLINED Grow in artificially heated seedling hot box. E or L Only sow/plant Early or Late in the month.

## WHAT TO DO IN THE VEGGIE PATCH

### • Plant carrots

October is a good time to plant carrots as soil temperatures would have risen enough to get a more reliable strike rate. Carrots need a soil temperature of 12+ Deg. C to germinate, planting them when the soil temperatures are lower than 12 Deg. can be a hit and miss affair. To plant carrots:-

(1) Add a shovelful of sand per square metre (unless you have sandy soil), turn vigorously and rake flat. Some blood and bone can be added but if you have fertile soil little or no fertiliser is required to grow good carrots.

(2) Make up a mixture of 50% seed raising mix and 50% sand.

(3) Dig furrows about a centimetre deep and 25 centimetres apart.

(4) Poor the seed raising/sand mixture into each furrow until it is a half to three quarters full.

(5) Sprinkle the carrot seeds loosely in and top up with more



Carrot bed covered with 50% shade cloth. The edges are pinned down with bird netting pins and the shade cloth is kept off the ground with short lengths of irrigation polypipe.

of the seed raising/sand mixture. Lightly water in.

(6) Lay sticks or small lengths of irrigation polypipe on the bed at 90 degrees to the rows of carrots.

(7) Cover with 50% shade cloth and pin the edges down with bird netting pins. The shade cloth keeps the moisture level

and temperature of the soil more stable. It also creates a barrier between the emerging carrot seedlings and marauding snails and slugs. The sticks keep the shadecloth slightly above the ground.

(8) Remove the shadecloth when the carrot seedlings are pushing up against it.

• **Pinch out the heads of autumn planted broad beans to encourage the beans to set.**

• **Conduct snail and slug patrols.**

Snails and slugs will still be quite active so regularly go out at night with a torch and collect any snails and slugs you find for disposal. Repeat until the number of snails and slugs you find has reduced considerably.

• **Plant into bare soil.**

Soil temperature is crucial for seed germination and plant growth. As bare soil is warmer than soil covered with mulch continue to plant all your seeds and seedlings into bare soil until the hot weather arrives. Once seedlings are big enough you can cover the bed with mulch, usually beginning around the end of October.

• **Apply liquid manure to newly planted seedlings.**

Always apply liquid manure to the leaves as well as the roots of newly planted seedlings. This is because vegetables can absorb nutrients through both their leaves and roots. As newly planted seedlings will have damaged roots applying nutrients to the more intact leaves will give the seedlings a growth boost.

## **D WEEK**

This is the week when the soil temperature has warmed up enough to plant seeds and seedlings that require warmer soil to germinate. Except in cool mountainous areas it also marks the end of the frost risk period.

D week varies depending on where you live. In cool mountainous areas it will usually be around the second or third week in October while in warm inland and mild coastal areas it may come as early as mid-September. You will know D week has arrived when you hear the sound of incessant lawnmowers on the weekend, this indicates that the soil has warmed up enough for the grass to grow rapidly. D week will also vary from year to year depending on whether it is an early or late spring but generally it usually occurs within a two to three week window.

• **What to plant on or after D Week.**

Warm temperature seeds that can be planted include corn, beans, zucchini and pumpkin.

Warm temperature seedlings that can be planted include tomato, eggplant, basil, capsicum and chilli. However note that gardens in cool mountainous areas may still get a late frost after D week, so if you live in a cool mountainous area it's a good idea to cover warm soil seedlings with a temporary poly tunnel or tree guards for the first few weeks after planting. This will both protect them from a late frost and boost their growth rate by enhancing daytime temperatures.

• **Plant pumpkins and squash.**

The best way to plant pumpkins and squash is to:-

1) **Dig a hole 30 centimetres deep and 60 cm wide.**

1) **Add two spadeful's of animal manure and some blood and bone.**

2) **Mound soil over the hole until it is 10 centimetres above ground level. If the soil is heavy then add some sand to make it more friable.**

3) **Plant three or four seeds in two groupings on top of the mound. Unless the soil is very dry do not water in, the quickest way to kill pumpkin and squash seeds is to let them sit in cold wet soil.**

4) **Once the seedlings have emerged thin them out to the two strongest ones.**

An optional extra is to surround the mound with five or six bricks. The bricks will not only give added support to the mound (which will reduce erosion) they act as a heat bank, absorbing heat in the day and giving it off slowly at night.



**Pumpkin seedlings on a mound supported by bricks. Sand and eggshells have been spread over the top of the mound to encourage heat absorption and deter snails and slugs.**

- **Plant tomato seedlings.**

Plant into well drained friable soil with little or no fertiliser added. In the early stages of their growth well-watered and manured tomato plants will put most of their energy into producing shoots rather than fruit. Wait until the plants have begun to produce fruit in large numbers before adding fertiliser.

Do not mulch the soil until the start of the hot weather as tomatoes need warm soil to grow vigorously, mulch insulates soil from the sun's rays and keeps the soil at a lower temperature than bare soil. An optional extra is to cover your tomato plants with a temporary polytunnel or tree guards for the first few weeks after planting as it will enhance their growth rate.



Tomato seedlings protected by a Lasertite sheet tunnel (rear) and tree guards (front). They are only temporary and should be removed when the weather warms up.

- **Plant eggplant, capsicum and chilli seedlings.**

Plant in bare soil with a shovelful of manure and a handful of blood and bone per square metre. Once they begin to fruit apply plenty of water and regular doses of liquid fertiliser, this especially applies to capsicum plants. Like tomato plants eggplant, capsicum and chilli plants will do better if covered with a temporary polytunnel or tree guards for the first few weeks.

## WHAT TO DO IN THE GREENHOUSE

- **Plant capsicum, chilli, eggplant & basil seedlings.**

- **Plant cucumber, rockmelon & watermelon seeds.**

- **Remove any seedling trays after the seedlings have been planted out.**

- **Monitor for white flies and spray if detected.**

Whiteflies can be a major problem in a greenhouse as their numbers can rapidly build up in the ideal conditions greenhouses offer. Repeatedly spray with pyrethrum every three or four days until the whiteflies are all dead, this usually takes four or five goes.

## WHAT TO DO IN THE GARDEN

- **Control codling moth**

If you have apple trees that are prone to codling moth then spray with 1 part white oil to fifty parts water, this will kill the tiny codling moth larvae. It's also a good idea to wrap some hessian around the trunk of each apple tree. The codling moth larvae that isn't killed by spraying with white oil will pupate under this hessian as it offers protection to them. All you need to do is remove the hessian (along with the attached pupa) in the autumn and burn it.

But note that this control measure is less effective in urban areas as codling moths will readily travel to your apple trees from the neighbours' trees if codling moth control measures weren't applied to these trees.

- **Remove young fruit tree laterals**

Pinch out unwanted laterals on your fruit trees with your thumb and forefinger. This will reduce the amount of pruning you have to do later in the season.