

# URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

## The benefits of winter crops

There are two ways people think of winter crops: fall-grown crops harvested before winter and winter cover crops.

For fall-grown crops harvested before winter, although they may be considered winter crops, they do not actually grow in the winter. However, certain steps can be taken to lengthen a winter growing season in the garden. Gardening during the fall and winter, though it may seem uncommon or outlandish to some, actually helps improve your garden soil's tilth and fertility. It also leads to a home harvest of vegetables, which may rise in price during the winter season in the grocery store.

In areas with winter temperatures at their lows on average from 35 to 45 degrees Fahrenheit is the most ideal place to grow vegetables during cooler seasons. In areas like California, parts of Oregon and parts of Washington, although the temperatures can dip to as low as 0 degrees Fahrenheit and the soil can freeze up to four inches deep, it is usually a short-lived spell and once the soil thaws again, the plants will be fine. By carefully applying layers of mulch around your winter plants, this can help circumvent possible soil freezes by providing insulation. When mulching for winter protection, opt for mulches like peat moss, shredded newspaper, bark or sawdust. This will also cut down on winter weeds and helps to reduce moisture evaporation from the soil during the winter months.

Be sure to plant your vegetables well enough before the first frost brutal enough to kill a plant, and be sure the plant reaches its



[Everything you need to grow winter crops available at ufseeds.com](http://ufseeds.com)

maturity before that point. Once done, if you notice a bad frost coming on the weather channel, be sure to harvest your vegetables before it hits. Gardeners in southern states may be able to grow winter crops without assistance, but more northern states will need to use cold frames, greenhouses or hot beds to help the plants continue to grow and produce a harvest even in nasty weather.

A good selection of cool-weather crops to plant for a winter harvest would be beets, carrots, parsnip, rutabaga, globe onions, brussels sprouts, cabbages, fava beans and cauliflower. Plant cover crops like wheat or legumes as late as mid-September to grow during the winter season as well.

Another way to add several degrees even on a cold, cold day is by considering a windbreaker wall strategically placed in your garden to deter harsh winds from bringing cold temperatures into the garden. Also,



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by utilizing raised beds bordered by stone, bricks, concrete or wood, can keep soil at 8 to 12 degrees warmer than ground-level soil. Raised beds are not only used to grow cool-weather crops in the winter time, but you can also use these to grow hot-weather plants like peppers or tomatoes as early as in the spring.

Check out everything you need to grow winter crops at [ufseeds.com](http://ufseeds.com)!



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