



More Peas, Please!

By Dr. Matthew Lisy, UConn Adjunct Faculty

Finally the rain has stopped, so now what? We are left with warm and wet soil, which happens to be perfect for germinating seeds. The forecast looks like some rain, but certainly not as much as we have been having. Night time temperatures look more comfortable as well. Although we are in the middle of summer, it is the perfect time to start thinking about our final harvest in the fall.

In the spring we focus a lot on the last frost date. Here in Mansfield that is around May 14th. To be safe, many do not plant until Memorial Day weekend. Our first frost date is a bit different. Some sites list it as September 24th for Storrs, but other put us into October. These dates are based on statistical averages of weather data over many years. We could get an earlier than normal frost, or you may find your property is located in an area called a “frost pocket,” which is particularly prone to frosts due to topography. Having said that, we safely have somewhere between 50 and 60 days left in our growing season, which is plenty of time for another round of planting! Many people do not take advantage of this time, however, and lose out on a bounty of additional vegetables.

My pea crop was great this year. I have any frozen bags in the freezer, but why not have some more? I have plenty of leftover seed. I can pull the spent pea plants, along with any weeds, and replant peas in that same spot. Normally we encourage rotating crops, but this is still within the same season. If you have the room, by all means rotate, but many times we are only left with the spot that was remaining. Unless you had some disease or pest problem, replanting will be okay right now. Next year I would recommend moving them to a different location in the garden.



The author's spent pea plants are ready to be pulled out. Now is the ideal time to replant peas for another crop in the fall (photo by M. Lisy).

Lettuce is another crop that does not mind the cold weather You can start indoors if easier, or direct seed into the garden. Keeping the soil moist during germination does not seem like it will be a very big problem this year. Along with that, spinach, Swiss chard, beets, radishes, and carrots all make good additions to for the fall harvest and all tolerate some frost. Kale laughs at snow so that can be planted now as well. We usually harvest kale throughout the winter as needed with no additional protection from the cold.

If you have your own garlic, you are probably harvesting and drying them around this time of year. You could replant your own this fall if you have them! Otherwise, now is a good time to think about ordering garlic bulbs for fall planting. While you are at it, why not order some more flowering bulbs like daffodils to liven up the yard? Regardless of what type of bulb you are ordering, they should be ordered now for good selection. Garlic bulbs seem to sell out particularly fast. There are many, many varieties to choose from. Just be careful - it can be addicting!

Another strange addition we would not normally think of planting this time of year is summer squash. I find that I have volunteers coming up all over the garden as I put compost down throughout the growing season. This is one plant I would try and find another spot for. Insect pests usually hit the plants and are its demise. Replanting in the same spot will not be productive.

In addition to zucchini, another warm weather crops that should have time to produce are beans. You should probably stick to the bush varieties here which take about 50 days. Stay away from the pole beans as they usually take somewhere around 75 days. The only hazard with fall harvests is the unpredictability of frosts. If we do get an early frost this year, throw an old sheet over your mid-summer planted warm weather crops if possible. The cold weather vegetables I talked about in this article should tolerate light frost. If you really want to maximize your growing season, you can put low tunnels over your patches. These are usually framed with metal conduit or plastic piping and covered with fabric and/or plastic which makes a mini greenhouse.

Last but certainly not least, take some time to enjoy your garden. I find that my perennial patches seem to be thriving right now. So many different species are flowering. Many people like to cut the flowers and bring inside. I prefer to leave them in the yard and enjoy the beauty on daily garden walks. It seems to be a great year for hummingbirds and butterflies as well. My plants are covered in these little creatures.



One of the author's perennial flower patches alive with butterflies, hawkmoths, and hummingbirds – none of which would pose for this photo (photo by M. Liszy).

If you have questions about second plantings or on other gardening topics, feel free to contact us, toll-free, at the UConn Home & Garden Education Center at (877) 486-6271, visit our website at www.ladybug.uconn.edu or contact your local Cooperative Extension center.