

KPOV – *The Point*
Gardening: Get Good at It
“The Mid-Season Garden”
July 24, 2018

Hot, dry weather in Central Oregon leads to many issues in the middle of the gardening season that all gardeners should address. By this time of the season, many of the cold season crops that were planted early, such as radishes, lettuce, spinach, broccoli, pak choi and other greens are ready to be harvested. Spinach and lettuce, in particular, do not like the hot sun and warm temperatures. You should be harvesting these plants on a regular basis. Lettuce and spinach leaves can be harvested in the morning from the outside leaves in, and are best before they have “bolted” - before flowering and going to seed – for best flavor. Harvest broccoli when the buds of the head are tight and firm, before the head flowers. If yellow flowers begin to appear, harvest the head immediately. For best taste, harvest the heads in the morning by cutting off about 5 inches below the head. Side flowerets will continue to grow and can be harvested again and again. Zucchini has started to come on in some gardens, and are best when harvested when small and tender. Remember to start another crop of greens that can be harvested later in the season – if possible, try shading some the cool weather plants using strategic planting under taller plants such as peas

Some people hate to see a plant go to waste, so take a deep breath if you want the best crop possible and thin your plants. This allows room for proper growth, good air circulation and reduces competition for nutrients and water from nearby plants. Most vegetables sown directly in the soil rather than transplanted will need thinning. Beets and chard, which grow from compound seeds that produce several plants, are especially prone to overcrowding. In the case of beets, if you don't thin, you will get all tops and no roots. They must have room to expand underground. With chard, you will get many small, spindly leaves and no large ones with those delectable crunchy ribs. Chard that hasn't been thinned also has a tendency to bolt.

It's far better to have one-tenth of the crop flourishing than the whole lot malnourished and spindly. Root and salad crops are not so sensitive to root disturbance while thinning. But it is a good idea to thin when the soil is damp rather than dry. Plants will slip out more easily then, and the ones you leave behind will stand less risk of having their roots exposed to air pockets in the soil. If it's dry when you thin, irrigate the garden as soon as you're done to resettle the soil around the roots of the survivors.

Finally, an important garden task at this time of year is weeding. A weed is defined as a plant considered undesirable, unattractive, or troublesome, especially one growing where it is not wanted, as in a garden. A weed is in competition with your vegetables for nutrients and water, so eliminating them, or at least controlling them, will help you have a successful harvest. You can make weeding a less onerous task by mulching your garden with organic material such as leaves or straw and keeping ahead of the weeds. Weeding just 10 minutes a day is a way to keep the weeds down and make the job easier.

Gardening is a process that requires constant tending. Keep at it and good luck for a continued successful harvest!

That's it for today's Gardening: Get Good at It with the OSU Extension Service Master Gardeners. For more information or questions about gardening or to contact a Master Gardener, call 541 548 6088 or visit our website at gocomga.com Look for the KPOV tab on the orange bar.