

Backyard Coldframing

with Karen Geiser

Introduction

Reasons for Gardening Year Round:

Principles of Winter Gardening:

1. Protect plants from their two worst enemies in winter - the cold & wind.
2. Choose cold hardy varieties.

A Winter Gardening Plan:

1. Decide on size and location. A 4'x8' plot in a sunny location is a good place to start, also consider a protected flowerbed.
2. Soil preparation - compost, sand, other amendments
3. Plan your layout. Square foot gardening method. What does your family like?
4. Planting schedule - The goal is to bring things to 80-90% maturity by the time November hits. Most things will be planted in August and September but you can also plant lettuce and spinach in mid October to overwinter for early spring harvest.
5. Plant Care - Put cover (barrel, plastic on frame, old window, etc.) on mid-late October and vent on sunny days. Keep watered till about November.
6. Harvest - Sometimes after a cold night your plants will be frozen in morning and you will need to wait to harvest till afternoon. Most things you can take a few leaves at a time. Mache and bok choy can be cut at base.
7. Planting for spring - In February and March I start planting seeds for more greens or transplanting lettuces in open spaces under the cold frames. You can also use cold frames to start cabbage and broccoli plants to be transplanted outdoors and later to harden off tomatoes and peppers.
8. Spring regrowth - Early March there is enough heat and light for the plants to take off growing again and a new garden season starts.
9. Spring finale - As temperatures again go up, remember to vent the coldframe on sunny days. Let a few plants go to seed and you will have seedlings galore for next fall. You can also move your cold frame to give summer seedlings like tomatoes and peppers a head start.
10. Clean-up - dismantle cold frame for storage and enjoy the bounty of summer.

Favorite cold frame greens in the Geiser garden:

Winter Density lettuce, Space spinach, Kale (Red Russian, Siberian, Winterbor, Redbor, Rainbow Lacinato, Black Tuscan), Swiss chard, arugula, ruby mizuna, claytonia, mache, bok choy, sorrel, salad burnet, pea shoots, cilantro, parsley, chervil, garlic scallions, leeks, chives, calendula, johnny jump ups

Ideas for Eating your Greens:

- Make a colorful mixed salad with baby greens.
- Lightly steam kale or chard pieces and season with butter and salt or lemon juice.
- Chop kale or chard finely and add to soups just before serving.
- Greens blend well in dishes with tomato sauce such as lasagna or baked beans.
- Mix chopped greens into mashed potatoes, rice dishes or omelets.
- Use them for green smoothies. A Geiser favorite is yogurt, frozen fruit, flax seed and a couple kale leaves in the blender. Sweeten with honey or stevia.
- Try kale chips. Curly kale works best but any variety will do. Tear leaves into 2-3" pieces and discard ribs. In a large mixing bowl drizzle a small amount of olive oil and your choice of seasoning salt (we like Herby) over leaves. Toss to coat evenly. Several options for baking are using a food dehydrator at highest setting (around 145) for 1 1/2-2 hours or laying them on a cookie sheet in a 250 degree oven for 20 minutes or 350 oven for 8-10 minutes. Be careful not to over bake.

Some excellent seed catalogues:

FEDCO Seeds fedcoseeds.com

Johnnys Selected Seeds johnnyseeds.com

Seed Savers seedsavers.org

Baker Creek Heirloom seeds rareseeds.com

My favorite local greenhouse - Mt Eaton Greenhouse, 15172 Harrison Rd

Resources:

[Four Season Harvest](#) and [The Winter Harvest Handbook](#) - Eliot Coleman

[Edible Salad Garden](#) - Rosalind Creasy

[The Twelve Month Gardener](#) - Jeff Ashton

[The Year Round Gardener](#) - Niki Jabbour

[Backyard Coldframing](#) DVD - Karen Geiser, includes planting guide \$15

[Local Choices](#) - Karen Geiser and Lisa Amstutz, a friendly introduction to local foods with stories, ideas and recipes \$10 today (reg. \$11.99)

KarensGarden.net - Follow my garden journals.

Lehmans.com - Stop by to visit with me in the garden room on Thursdays from 10-2 from April - November.