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Contributed by Pam Keeton

THE FALL GARDEN

Summer is flying by and I'm already thinking about my fall vegetable garden. Our falls on the Eastern Shore are glorious and provide good weather for extending the growing season.



A good place to start with planning is checking frost dates. The *Farmer's Almanac* projects our first frost around November 1. Counting back from that date tells me when to plant my seeds.

The University of Maryland Extension produces a helpful Vegetable Planting Calendar that includes time periods for direct sowing seeds in the ground vs. starting them in the house and then planting out. The list of vegetables we can plant now includes snap beans, Chinese cabbage, carrots, Swiss chard, kale, lettuce, mustard greens, radishes, spinach, and turnips.

I started another crop of Brussel sprouts earlier this month. They should be ready to plant out in a couple of weeks for harvest in November. Frost makes them sweeter, and I am hoping for a good crop!

Flowers

I am developing an interest in flowers and ornamentals to plant in late summer for fall harvest – especially those I can direct sow.

While not technically a flower, ornamental kales and cabbages produce beautiful, long-lasting foliage and are fantastic in autumn arrangements. I tried Crane Pink ornamental kale last year. They almost look like roses and provided color in the garden through January. Other beauties include Crane Feather King White and Crane Feather Queen Red.



"Pink Crane" ornamental kale



Sunflower "White Lite"

Ornamental kales and cabbages are easy to start from seed, either indoors or directly in the garden.

Several varieties of sunflowers can be planted now for a fall harvest. Several need only 50 days to mature, which gives you time to plant and harvest before frost ⁴

As the days grow shorter, sunflowers will produce fewer flowers. And when they are spent, I usually leave on a few heads for the birds.