

We printed this article last year, but since we saw so many veggie gardeners this spring, we thought we would re-print it. If you decide to have a fall/winter veggie garden, be sure to attend our Fall Veggie Gardening Seminar on September 11, 13, 25, & 27. See the front page for times and more info. Otherwise, read below to have an even better veggie garden next summer.

What else can I do with spent summer garden? Plant green manure.

Green manure is plant material that is grown for its nitrogen-fixing properties or to protect soil from erosion and compaction during winter rains, and to keep weeds down. The harvested plant material is used for compost to enrich the soil for spring planting. For larger garden areas that won't be dedicated to a winter harvest, planting green manure can help ready the ground for spring.

What to plant

Fast growing nitrogen fixers
 Alfalfa
 Clovers*
 Faba (bell beans)*
 Fava beans (produces edible beans)*

**Good cover crops
but not nitrogen fixing**
 Annual rye*
 Buckwheat *
 Oats

*Available by the pound at the Nursery

How to plant

Remove old plant material (large roots, stems, fruit) from the area. Rake smooth and sow seeds at a high density rate. Rake into the soil. Add a layer on top if necessary to cover larger seeds. Water in well. Keep moist until germination (irrigate if it is not raining yet).

The easiest way is to compost in place. When the plants are in 80% flower, turn them under with a shovel preferably. (Note, if they go to seed, you will have to start the process all over again!) Rototillers work, but do a lot of damage to the underlying soil structure when used repeatedly. It takes about a month for the plants to decompose this way if the area is kept watered (either from rain or weekly watering if there is no rain). Dry plant material takes much longer to decompose. You can also pull them up and toss them into a compost bin, then add compost back to the area when you plant.

To plant spring vegetables, put your new layer of organic matter/planting mix right on top and plant as usual. Less fertilizer should be needed to sustain your summer crop.

Answer these questions if you want to enter the raffle and get a free seed packet (on the other side).

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Mt. Democrat Clipper

Do you have any plants that did surprising well last winter?