

# Fall Frosts and Freezes

The first frost in the fall will damage some frost sensitive crops. Others may be slightly damaged but will continue to grow for several weeks until a severe freeze kills them. Other crops are hardy and will stand fairly low temperatures. These can be used into the winter months as needed.

Vegetables can be harvested as they mature. From mid- to late October in most areas of Kansas, the weather forecast will indicate when a frost that will freeze tender vegetation is on the way. Many vegetables will have been producing vigorously for 2–4 weeks prior to this date; however, it may be possible to continue harvest for an even longer period of time. Often, a few nights of low temperatures will be followed by warmer weather for several weeks. If you can protect tender vegetation during these few cold nights, you can continue harvesting vegetables. Some gardeners attempt to gain more days of growing time by covering plants with baskets, blankets, or plastic at the first frost warning.

Concentrate on saving only the tender vegetables which will be easily damaged by a slight frost. Other vegetables that may be growing in the garden and need protection are peppers, eggplant, tomatoes, and sweetpotatoes. Temporary coverings of polyethylene plastic, blankets, or tarpaulins may be stretched over the rows to provide frost protection. A small light bulb burning underneath such coverings can provide protection from freezes to around 25°F. Coverings should be anchored so that they will not damage garden crops if a sudden wind develops. As little foliage as possible should come in contact with the surface of the covering because that foliage will freeze rapidly. After the danger of frost has passed, remove the coverings; be prepared to put them on again if a sudden frost is forecast later.

Semi-hardy vegetables should be harvested if temperatures in the mid- to upper twenties are forecast and hardy vegetables harvested if temperatures in the low twenties seem imminent. Root crops such as beets, carrots, potatoes, and turnips may be mulched and used as needed until the soil begins to freeze, usually in late November to December.

<b>Sensitivity of Fall-Planted Vegetables to Freezing Temperatures</b>		
<b>Tender Crops</b>	<b>Semi-hardy Crops</b>	<b>Hardy Crops</b>
Damaged by First Frost	Can Stand Light Frost	Can Stand Several Frosts, but Should Be Used Before Low 20°F Temperatures
Beans	Beets	Cabbage
Cucumbers	Chinese cabbage	Broccoli
Summer squash	Collards	Cauliflower
	Irish potatoes	Brussels sprouts
	Bibb lettuce	Carrots
	Mustard	Turnips
	Radishes	Kale
	Spinach	
	Swiss chard	
	Leaf lettuce	