



## Kitchen Garden Update - Southern Australia

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Southern Australia's Mediterranean climate means that vegetable gardens are always full to overflowing with seasonal food right throughout the year. In this photo of the Fern Avenue Community Garden in Adelaide, in September, you can see a cornucopia of food which will continue to be picked almost up until Christmas. There is barely a square foot of vacant soil. This presents us with one big problem ? how do we start growing the summer vegetables while still harvesting the winter goodies and collecting saved seed?

Here is my solution. I begin by sowing tomatoes, capsicums, eggplants and other long maturation vegetables this time of the year in seed trays or foam boxes. I have a preference for using a soil blocker but that is a story for another day. Once the seedlings are big enough to transplant, I pot them up into pots. There is no need to get these plants into the ground early, they are equally as happy in well-cared for pots for a couple of months even. In fact, being in pots until they are quite large plants can help force them into flowering mode, meaning that as soon as they are planted out into the garden, production will be fast. In some parts of southern Australia it is not advisable to plant out until mid November, in case there is a late frost, so this method works well there too.

While many gardeners have wonderful rows of summer plants flourishing in late September or early October, they are having to buy vegetables to eat as they have removed all sign of their winter wonderland. To me this is a crazy way to garden and is very wasteful. My garden genuinely provides nearly all of my vegetables nearly all of the time, with no hungry gaps.

I allow several of each type of vegetable to flower - the earliest to produce, the latest to produce and the best of the crop. This way all their genes cross happily and the seeds I save will hopefully give me early, late and excellent quality plants next winter. The rest of the crop is removed as soon as it begins to bolt as I do not want the poorest of the plants to be sharing their genes.

In this way small spaces begin to appear, dotted about in the garden, which I quickly fill with seeds of fast-producing plants, such as lettuce, after topping up the soil with some rich compost. Thus the winter garden is ever so slowly transformed into the summer garden, with barely any soil being left unoccupied for long and never a day going by when a meal cannot be gathered.

*Text and photo credit: Kate Flint, the [Vegetable Vagabond](#)[1].*

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