**Survival Gardening, by Delia L. in Oregon**

By [James Wesley, Rawles](http://www.survivalblog.com) on November 18, 2010 7:22 PM

As we near to the end of the days of the dollar as reserve currency for the world, feeding our families becomes much more important. Most gardens go in over a late spring weekend with little thought given to trying to keep a family fed during the winter. My focus is on growing food year round with an emphasis on nutritional content. There are ways to keep tomatoes growing later in the season, or trying to keep greens growing year round. What can we grow that can be stored without electricity or canning. What can we save seed from in order to become more self reliant. Gardening can save you a lot of money while improving your health. Talk about a win-win situation! We use small raised bed garden areas for winter gardening 4' wide with almost a foot of elevation. We live in Oregon and the winters constant rains can flood everything drowning your dinner. I use ½” PVC sections cut 10' long and hooked onto short rebar sections beat into the dirt and covered with clear plastic to keep off the produce rotting rains and help keep it a few degrees warmer inside the hoop house. The ground stays a bit warmer anyway so low to the ground hoops work well. I also save gallon jugs filled with water to use to hold the plastic down and act as a heat sink to help keep things from freezing. So fold the plastic in and put the jugs inside the hoop. Spinach, lettuces, cabbage, carrots etc will all take some light freezes. This gives you some fresh foods coming in all winter long.

For winter focus on spinach, mustards, dandelions and other nutritious greens. Many started mid-summer can be kept growing slowly under a cloche in the winter. Low levels of light drastically limit plant growth rates. So pre planning and spacing become vital. I start planting for winter harvest in July. when the heat is on, few of us think about starting seeds. July is a good time to start carrots, cabbage, broccoli, lettuce and potatoes for overwintering. I also like to start Walla Walla onions and garlic in September. If you have never had fresh, home grown garlic you are in for a treat.  It is up there with home grown tomatoes and corn for taste improvement over the store bought veggies. It is important to keep the winter garden seeds moist while germinating, which can be a little tricky when it is hot.  I bought a new timer from Bi-mart that has a 6- hour setting.  It worked quite well keeping my seeds moist. This works on batteries so put away several or set up a battery charger you can crank by pedaling a bicycle, or get a small solar charger. I try to automate as much as I can. You will want to get most vegetables planted by the beginning of August, depending on the maturity dates of the varieties you select. Varieties that have around a 60 day expected maturity can go in as late as mid August. I like to try to plant spinach and lettuces every two weeks almost year round.

Potatoes and carrots can be kept out in the garden and harvested as needed all winter long. I grow a lot of garlic and onions to store in a cool dry area, One of the best things to grow are winter squashes. Acorn squashes are high in vitamins and minerals and are easy to store for the winter, there are many winter squashes our grandparents used to grow to have food for the winter. Sweet meat, pink banana delicata the list goes on. All are nutritious, easy to grow, easy to store and easy to save seeds from. Cabbages can be grown for winter use and kept in the garden under a plastic cover for quite some time and get sweeter with frosts. Or they can be piled in a card board box in a cool garage or basement. When one starts to go bad you can slice it up for *sauerkraut* or *kimchi* fermented food have additional health benefits.

I have a shelves in my garage and pantry about 18” apart. I get card board boxes and use an X-acto knife to cut holes for ventilation and fill them with onions, squashes, apples, beets, pears and other food that stores in a cool dry place. Carrots, potatoes and other root crops can be stored in damp sand in a plastic barrel or tub if you need the space open for your winter garden. The winter garden needs more space than a summer garden because sunshine is at a premium. Space is also needed in order to allow ventilation to avoid mildews. A spray of baking soda and water can be used to treat mold and mildew. I use a table spoon of baking soda in a quart spray bottle. My secret weapon for amazing plant growth is manure tea I use a cheap aquarium pump with air stones in a barrel with a bit of manure (I use horse manure, since we have loads of it,) and water. Using this I would have orchids bloom for months on end. Things got too hectic to continue with my normal garden activities and I started using a store bought fertilizer and my orchids quit blooming.

The planning is most important and often not done. How much of what do you need to feed a family for a year? How much space will it take to grow it? How much space will be needed to store it? What conditions are needed for the best storage cool/dry? Cool moist? Say for instance you want to have cabbage every week so you need to grow 52 cabbages. Do you need to plant them all at once? A long season cabbage? Or do you grow a 60 day variety? Do you plant out 6 every month and then plant enough to get you through the winter July 15? Will you cover them with a plastic hoop house and store them in the garden or put them in card board boxes and create a type of root cellar storage area? How many winter squashes and of what kind? I plant acorn squashes in the middle of a section of field fencing formed into a circle, the vines climb the wire and keep the squash off the ground and save a lot of space. If you want to have squash every week you will need to grow 52 of them! Maybe 10 acorn and 10 pink banana 10 sweet meat 10 pumpkins 10 Butter nuts and 10 sweet potato squash. I grow most of my squashes even pumpkins on fence rounds I grow cucumbers on them and tomatoes in them. The holes are big enough I can get my hands in for picking, they hold the fruit up off the ground and save space. I will get 10 acorns off 2 fence sections depending on the growth style if the plant is a vining type I can grow three plants in one fence section. You must stake them down I use regular T posts beat into the ground.

I cover my garden area with black plastic to warm the soil and cut down on weeding. I have drip tubes on a timer under the plastic to help block them from the UV rays so they last longer. These go on automatically. I have the same set up for my orchard. I have a gravity fed spring with a holding tank and high water usage mid summer when water production is lower. My timers go on in the middle of the night when everyone is sleeping and water usage is low. The tubing is black so I worry if the water went on mid afternoon the water would come out to hot it would harm my plants. I have built a test solar heater out of black 1 ½ “ abs pipes glued together and laid on the ground with a small tank on a chair to see if we could heat water that way, how long it would take etc. It heated water surprisingly quickly. So I started worrying about the black drip tubing scalding my plants after that! So for acorn squash I can plan on two fence sections for growing area and 1 card board box on the wooden shelf will hold 10 squashes and they generally will last till they are eaten. Pink banana squash are delicious and easy to grow. The label says not for the space conscious it should say when planted in Oregon some vines may reach Kentucky! Plant them on the edge and watch them go they are very productive. They are also quite large so 1 squash would feed many people or have leftovers that could need to be canned or? If there is no electricity and we were having to make due without refrigeration. So with every pro; big feeds a lot. There is a con; may need to can up leftovers. If the SHTF and the refrigerator is kaput! In the winter we could use a plywood box in the back of the house (north side under the firewood storage area) as a refrigerator. I don't know how far along you are in your long term survival planning. Try to think of as many things to be ready now.

If you want the most bang for your buck plant fruit trees. A few fruit trees can be placed quite close together and provide a lot of food every year with little work. I surrounded my fruit trees with a fence to keep deer out and my chickens in! My coop is located on the edge of my orchard so my chickens act as pest management and dropped fruit clean up system. Many fruit tree pests will go into a larval stage and be in the dirt at the base of the tree where the chickens can scratch them up or climb up the trunk where the chickens can pick them off. I use a heavy oil to help smother other bugs and avoid most poison sprays. Also berries, I have blueberries and grapes and as many other foods as I can incorporate into my landscaping. I also have planted nut trees a good protein source once they start producing. Also consider medicinal herb plants. Witch hazel and cramp bark are two good ones to have witch hazel helps clean wounds and kill germs, and cramp bark is good for menstrual cramps or cramps from wounds or back strain. A preppers knowledge should incorporate medicinal herbs in plant form. God makes better medicines than men. It is high time we learned how to use them, before we really have to.

A myth has developed that you can not grow food from vegetables grown from saved hybrid seeds. That is not quite accurate. The fact is a seed taken from a hybrid tomato will grow a tomato just not necessarily a tomato the same as the one it came from. When you are hungry even a lousy tasting tomato is food. If you plant several seeds you can get several different tomato plants growing. Save one of the best tomatoes from a plant that grows and plant seeds from it. In three generations it will grow true. You can plant garlic or potatoes from the store and get starts that way. They are often treated with an anti-sprout chemical but at some point nature will over ride the chemical and if that is all you have use it. I have done this with sweet potatoes as well. Not great sprouting results but once you get some growing you can save starts from them. The most important thing is to get going! The sooner you start the more prepared you will be.

**Vegetable Seeds**
I agree with an earlier SurvivalBlog posting on the hybrid seed issue they do grow well. I have a friend that has grown his own seeds now for five years and his garden is amazing all the plants now have been bred specifically for his micro climate so if you have some hybrid seeds save them for when you can not get food and must grow some to survive. Practice now growing your own seeds!

Some good seed suppliers:

* [SuperSeeds.com](https://www.superseeds.com/)
* [ParkSeed.com](http://www.parkseed.com)
* [TerritorialSeed.com](http://www.territorialseed.com/)
* [GoodwinCreekGardens.com](http://www.goodwincreekgardens.com/) (A good place to get medicinal herb plants)

I am attempting to grow my own varieties of seeds so we will see how that works out this spring, I also have other seeds saved just in case. I store my seeds in a gallon jar in the pantry cool dry and I put baked drywall cubes in as a desiccant. You can store beans rice etc in trash cans lined with plastic bags with a bowl of baked drywall cubes in it secure the plastic with a metal twisty after sucking out excess air. To make baked drywall cut drywall into 1” cubes and bake on a cookie sheet for 20 minutes at 350. Beans stored this way last for decades. If you read any of the survival blogs from Argentina when Goldman Sachs and Citibank looted their country privatizing the profits and publicizing the debts (sound familiar?) They all say I wish I had more food! Buy food think beans and wheat, since gold and silver are worthless when you are starving.