

# **WINTER FARMING**

## **Learning Objectives**

*The learner will:*

- Identify opportunities for winter farming and season extension.
- Receive an introduction to production aids relative to winter farming.

## **Climate**

*Crop possibilities vary widely with climate, but generally there are crops that are well suited to winter production in most cold climates (ie. cabbage family, roots, and greens.)*

- Maritime Pacific Northwest climate
  - good for winter crops, ground generally does not freeze
  - cool and moist means no irrigation required, but promotes rot and disease
- Colder climates
  - winter harvest possible with production aides. (see “Production Aids” section of this chapter.)

## **Winter harvest means summer planting**

- The key to fall/winter harvest is to seed crop in June, July, and August to achieve adequate growth by the end of October.
- Decreasing levels of light in fall will slow plant growth to near dormancy. Growth resumes in late winter when the light levels increase.
- Due to the seasonal lack of light and growth, vegetables harvested from November through March must be mature by the end of October. (The exception is over-wintered crops – see “Over-wintered crops” section of this chapter.)
- Lots of space required. No succession planting is possible after this harvest because the soil is too wet, (or even frozen in northern interior climate zones.)

## **Crops for fall and winter**

- Sown in summer
- Harvested October through May
- Must be mature or nearly mature at the end of October in order to survive the cold
- Growth resumes in late winter when most plants will start to flower. If greens become bitter or roots become woody, crops are past their harvest window.
- See Appendix 1 for crop list and planting dates

## **Over-wintered crops**

- Planted in late summer for a spring harvest. (An exception to this would be garlic that should be planted in the fall for a summer harvest.)
- Successfully over-wintered crops achieve enough growth by the end of October to survive the cold, possible snow, and lots of rain.
- Growth resumes in late winter and crop reaches maturity in spring.

## **Production Aids**

### *Season extension*

- *later into fall*
- *earlier in spring*
- *December and January still too dark for growth*
- *Oct, Nov, Feb, March – enough light for some growth but soil temperature must be high enough and the plants will benefit from a protected environment. Production aids will do this, ie. “extend the season.”*
  
- Warm and sheltered spot
  - south facing slope
  - windbreak
  
- Mulches
  - straw moderates soil temperature
  - plastic raises soil temperature
  
- Low covers
  - Remy or plastic over wire hoops to create a tunnel over a row crop
  
- Cold frames
  - Low wood frame with glass or plastic over top
  
- Walk-in tunnels
  - Plastic over hoops, tall enough to work in
  
- Greenhouses
  - Permanent, framed skeleton with glass or plastic for roof

**Reference:** Four Season Harvest by Elliot Coleman

### **Assessment/Review**

- Can you differentiate between the planting and growth schedules of Fall/Winter harvest crops and over-wintered crops?
- Name several ways of extending the season by using production aids.
- What crops are generally well suited to winter production in most climates?