

## Winter Gardening in Citrus County

*By Matt Lenhardt, Citrus County Horticulture Extension Agent*

Home vegetable gardening is a fun way to stay active and provide fresh food to consume. In Florida, we are blessed with a climate that is conducive to year round vegetable gardens, as long as attention is paid to the variety of vegetable and it's planting time. First, choose a site for your garden that has good drainage, gets at least six hours of sun per day, and for convenience, is close to a source of water.

Depending on the growth requirements of your vegetables, incorporate organic matter or compost into the soil to improve nutrient and water holding capacity before planting. Knowing your soil's pH level, as well as your vegetables desired soil pH level, is also recommended for optimizing plant growth and vegetative yield. If you are not sure of your soil's pH or nutrient level, testing services are available at the Citrus County Extension office.

Some vegetables that are recommended to plant in the winter months in our area include: Carrots, Broccoli, Beets, Turnips, Radishes, Mustard Greens, and Onions. If you are interested in other varieties, check their planting time and growth recommendations to make sure that they are suitable for our area as well. After planting, fertilize as needed, monitor for pests on a regular basis, and irrigate as recommended. To save water, use mulch or drip irrigation techniques. Most importantly, enjoy the cool winter weather and enjoy your garden.

For more information on this subject or other gardening issues, please contact the Citrus County Extension office at 527-5700 or stop by the Master Gardener Volunteer plant clinic consultation desk Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. We are located in the Lecanto Government complex at 3650 W. Sovereign Path, Ste.1, Lecanto, FL, 34461.

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