

Our lesson last week and this is Cole crops. You guessed it we are planting for our fall garden. Now I didn't misspell it. It is our Cole crop lesson set and yes these are plants that do well in less heat. See if you can figure out what "cole" stands for and you will see how that ties into some of the crops we are about to plant. Cole crops are defined in your manual.

Heading into the fall is often associated with "the harvest" meaning harvesting and storing foods to go through a growing season of rest. Trees begin to show some color and leaves eventually begin to fall. And here in Texas we prepare for our fall garden which means planting broccoli, cabbage, turnips, radishes, beets, and carrots - cole and root crops of which these are just a few examples. And this has been exactly what we have been doing the last couple of weeks. It's a busy time because the summer crops are continuing to yield produce but if you look at the size of the harvest you can begin to see the amount of produce for a given crop is lessening. For example, the yard long beans have stopped blooming and there are no more beans to be picked. That's sad as they were delicious and I look forward to growing them again. Can you figure out when we should begin to plant them again? Hint, look at the planting guide in the back of your manual. One summer crop that is still blooming and providing us with food is our okra! These plants are still growing and blooming so we can expect more produce in the coming weeks. Can you think of another summer crop that we will be enjoying soon? It is growing in the orchard and the annex and looks like it is taking over the area! It's the sweet potato!! The reason I mention this is because the next couple of weeks we will be harvesting our sweet potatoes. Once harvested the sweet potato needs to be cured for 1-2 weeks before using so that the carbohydrates can be converted into natural sugars.

Digging sweet potatoes can be a bit messy especially if the ground is wet. That's because the volunteers will loosen the soil around the sweet potato and then we will dig through the soil with our gloved hands to gather the sweet potato. Before we start the digging and gathering process we will need to remove all the sweet potato vines and bring them to the compost area. Once the sweet potatoes have been harvested they will need to be washed off to remove most of the soil and let dry before bagging for you to take home. It's a big job so we will have many teams working TOGETHER to make it happen.

Our next lesson set after cole crops will be root crops (Oct 29 and Nov 5th.) Please come appropriately dressed to harvest the sweet potatoes, gloves, no opened toed shoes!, and legs covered.

Stay safe and see you on thursday for the fun,