Opportunities in the Vegetable Garden

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The early part of February can be a busy time in the vegetable garden. It is time to make the last planting of the cool weather vegetables.

Potatoes- The popular underground crop likes cool weather but not in heavy doses such as hard freezes. February 1 is about the perfect time to plant potatoes in Central and South Texas.

Start by digging trenches 1 foot deep in the raised bed. Pile the soil on both sides of the trench. Obtain seed potatoes from your favorite nursery. I have best production results from red potatoes such as Pontiac. Cut the potatoes in pieces at least 2inches square with at least one eye on each piece. Small potatoes can be planted whole. Place the pieces of the potato in the trench with 2 feet between each piece. Cover the pieces to a depth of two inches in the trench and then add the rest of the soil in weekly additions as the stem emerges from the soil. Add the soil but leave the top of the stem uncovered.

Potato plants do not require high fertility or excessive moisture to produce a crop. Prepare the soil by spreading 1 cup of lawn fertilizer per 8 ft. over the planting area in and adjacent to the trench.

Begin digging the potatoes as you need them after the first blooms appear on the plant. Dig up the potatoes from the remaining plants when the foliage dies and browns. The potatoes produced in our Central Texas gardens do not store well. Use them as “new potatoes.”

Onions- Onion transplants are available at area nurseries. Plant them in rows along your drip irrigation line with two inches between plants. Harvest 2 of 3 onions in the row as green onions to provide a final spacing of 6 inches between plants by April 1 so full-size bulbs can be produced. The tops will fall over in late May to let you know that the onions are ready to be harvested. Store the harvested onions in mesh bags in an air-conditioned room or set them on a picnic table in the shade near the garden. The onions will store for about 5 months depending on the variety and the weather.

Onions are high nitrogen users. In addition to the pre-planting application of fertilizer described for potatoes, re-fertilize each 3 weeks through harvest.

Early February is also the time to plant broccoli, cabbage, collards, and chard transplants. Brussels sprouts and cauliflower usually do not have enough time before hot weather arrives to produce a crop.

By seed plant carrots, lettuce, beets, English peas, turnips and radishes.

The carrots, beets, lettuce, radishes, and Swiss chard are attractive additions to the patio and produce well in large containers.