

## Soil and Moisture

Soils can be depleted after the summer harvests, so it's a good idea to add aged manure or compost before planting the greens. Patty McManus-Huber, of Nash's Organic Produce, creates compost she says is comparable to a fine wine to enhance her alluvial soils in the Dungeness River valley of Sequim, Wash.

"We grow our fertility," she says of her and her husband, Nash, who farm 500 acres using a vintage Massey Ferguson® cultivator. She describes a recipe for compost that includes seaweed, wood chips, fish emulsions, the wastes of their organically grown vegetables and other ingredients. The brew then ages for three years.

An added benefit of growing winter greens is, after harvest, their decaying stems and roots will add to next year's soil fertility, while their thick leaves help keep weeds down.

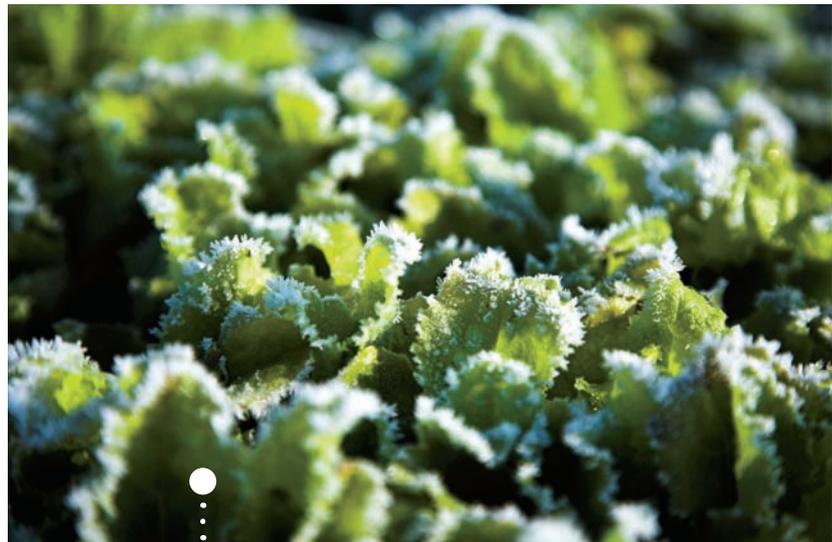
Drought can be a problem in getting a winter garden to maturity. Maintaining evenly moist soil during seed germination is easier if a shade cloth or simple lattice is placed over the area to keep the sun from drying it out. Many of these vegetables also require up to an inch of water per week to produce a healthy crop. A finely ground mulch placed between maturing plants will also help keep soils moist, weeds out and roots warm.

## Prolonging Harvest

Harvesting methods make a difference. For instance, leafy greens are best enjoyed by cutting the outer leaves while leaving the inside ones for later. Lettuces and their like will continue to produce new interior leaves until a hard freeze kills the plant.

Collard greens, a Southern delicacy, are best harvested after the first frost, which is credited with "sweetening" the flavor of the leaves. But don't harvest while the leaves are frozen or they will turn to mush when thawed. Instead, wait until the temperature warms the leaves before harvesting.

The cabbage and broccoli harvest can be extended by cutting the crowns high on the stem. This should allow the plant to send up side shoots from the remaining stem that can be harvested later. **FL**



**LETTUCES** can keep shooting new leaves until frost takes them out.

**BROCCOLI** can produce new shoots if you take the first harvest near the crown.

**COLLARDS** sweeten in flavor if they are left to the first frost, but wait until the leaves thaw and warm before harvest.



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■ For more tips on planting and harvesting fall and winter greens, see [myFarmLife.com/greens](http://myFarmLife.com/greens).