

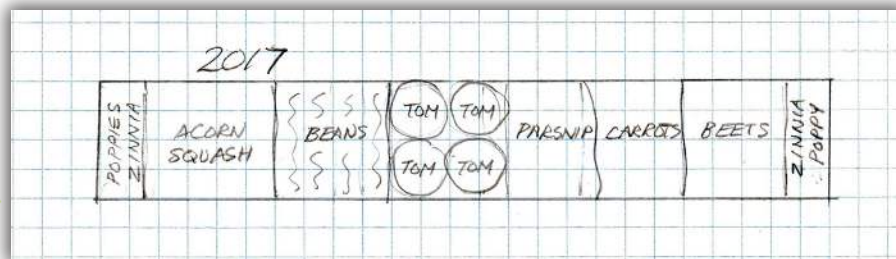
You can postpone the inevitable (that is, winter) for a while by covering your vegetables with old sheets or bedspreads on cold nights, but the declining light and chilly daytime temperatures will naturally bring plant growth to a halt.

Before you do this,

... do this ~

Make a fairly accurate sketch of this year's plantings. Refer to it at the start of next year to plan crop rotation. Without a plot drawing, you may not remember precisely where you planted things the preceding year.

Leave carrots, garlic, horseradish, leeks, parsnips, radishes, and turnips in the garden for harvesting through early winter. Mark the rows with tall stakes so that you can find them in snow, and cover them with a heavy layer of mulch to keep the ground from thawing.



Peas, beans and legumes should be uprooted. If they are disease-free, dig the foliage back into the soil, or compost them.

Pull up tomato, squash, and other plants. If they're disease-free, compost them. Pull up and put away the stakes.

If any plants are diseased, either burn them or discard separately.

Before the ground gets too hard, remove all weeds and debris to eliminate overwintering sites for insects and disease.

Gently till the soil to expose any insects who plan to overwinter; this will reduce pest troubles in the spring and summer.

This is one of the most effective ways to reduce populations of Japanese beetles, whose grubs live and overwinter in the ground.

Once most of the garden soil is exposed, add a layer of compost, leaves, manure (if you have it), and lime (if you need it). Gently till into the soil.

Another option is to sow **cover crops**.

If some areas have hopelessly gone to weeds, cover them with black plastic or a layer of cardboard and leave it in place over the winter and into the spring to kill sprouting seeds.

Cover Crops

Vegetable gardeners are becoming more aware that it is essential to care for the soil as much as caring for the vegetable plants. One of the best ways to feed soil microorganism with fresh organic matter, is to grow cover crops and dig them into the soil.

Cover crops that put on significant growth in the fall and then die during the winter add organic matter, recycle nutrients, improve soil health, and allow for earlier spring vegetable planting.

Legumes and grasses are especially fast-growing and are a good alternative to manure.

See the brief chart below. For more detail check out these websites:

<http://countryfolks.com/cover-crops-prove-to-be-a-good-management-tool-for-vegetable-growers/>

http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/cover_crops01/covercrops.htm

<http://covercrops.cals.cornell.edu/decision-tool.php>

<http://www.sustainablemarketfarming.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Cover-Crops-for-Vegetable-Growers-4pg-Handout-2016.pdf>

To amend and improve soil

Legumes – field peas, hairy vetch, red clover

Grasses – annual rye grass, oats, sudan grass, wheat, winter rye

For erosion control – barley, clovers, rye

To block weeds – buckwheat, oats, rye, wheat