Be a Winner with Fall Gardening: Gardening with children is always a good investment of your time and resources, but it is very important to make sure that the gardening experience is rewarding and enjoyable for them. The fall season of the year in Alabama is the absolute best time during which to plant a school vegetable garden. The following are some reasons why you should pick this fall to start a fall gardening program at your school.

- The children have just returned to school in August and the time to plant a fall garden is during the months of August & September.
- Most of the fall produce will need 60 to 90 days before it is ready to harvest. This means it will be ready for harvest from late October into December.
- The children will be around during the entire growing season which also means they will be able to tend the garden and enjoy the harvest.
- Several healthy garden plants need the cooler weather that fall provides to reach maturity.
- The cooler days makes working in the garden more enjoyable.
- There are fewer garden problems such as insect pests and plant diseases.
- Many of the pesky summer weeds won’t sprout in the fall as the days get cooler.
- You can extend the growing season even longer with a cold frame or row cover cloth.
- The cooler weather provides a longer harvest period.
- We normally get more rainfall in the late fall.
- Fall leaves become available for mulching (and they are free).

There are a lot of vegetable plants that can be grown in a fall garden. The following is a list of some of these plants.

- Broccoli (Best to purchase trays of the plants)
- Brussels sprouts (Best to purchase trays of the plants)
- Cabbage (Best to purchase trays of the plants)
- Cauliflower (Best to purchase trays of the plants)
- Collards (Best to purchase trays of the plants)
- Leaf lettuce, kale and other salad greens (Plant by seed)
- Mustard greens (Plant by seed)
- Spinach (Plant by seed)
- Carrots (Plant by seed)
- Turnips (Plant by seed)

When planting seeds from the bottom five garden plants in the above list, you may want to mix the seeds with sand. The seeds are so tiny that a pinch of just seeds would probably contain 20 seeds. This makes it difficult to spread the seeds over the garden row. By mixing them with sand, the seeds are dispersed more evenly and a pinch will not include as many seeds. A good rule is to use 4 times as much sand as seeds (4 tsp of sand to one tsp of seeds). This way, as you sow the seeds, it spreads them out along the row better so that you don’t have to pull as many when you thin them at a later date.

You may also access more gardening information from the Alabama Gardener’s Calendar on the Alabama Cooperative Extension’s Website at https://store.aces.edu/itemdetail.aspx?ProductID=13856

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