



GROWING PLACES

EARLY FALL

Tomatoes, eggplant and peppers have been loving the late season heat and humidity. Normally, we'd be recommending that you cut back on watering this time of year, but despite the cool nights and plentiful dew, we are simply not getting the rain we need to keep these three plants moist. They all benefit from deep, regular water. Too little water and the fruits are tough, too much all at once and the fruits will crack, or develop black tips called blossom end rot. Slow, deep watering at the base of the plant may be time consuming, but you will harvest the benefits for days to come.

It's good gardening practice to clear away fallen or yellowing leaves and spoiled vegetables from around all of your vegetable plants both to prevent the spread of disease and to avoid providing a cozy home for insects over the winter. You can compost decayed plant matter, but if you think it may be diseased, discard it.

Bell peppers are swelling and will soon begin turning orange or red, depending on which variety you planted. Chilies are red and glowing. When their color has deepened, they should feel firm to the touch, but have a little give when you squeeze them. Clip them off the plants; don't pull or twist them off, to avoid damaging the stems.

If you still have carrots growing, check that the orange tops are not exposed to sunlight because this will make them bitter. If you can see a circle of orange, mound up a little soil over it.

Your sage, oregano and thyme will grow again next year, so make sure that they have labels to prevent them from being dug up by mistake next spring. If you want to move them to another bed, now is the time to do it. Dig them out carefully with your trowel and a supporting hand, or best of all, lift them with a garden fork to retain as many roots as possible. Transplant immediately, gently pressing the soil around them. Remember to water carefully until they are re-established.

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The Complete Compost Gardening Guide | Deborah L. Martin and Barbara Pleasant