



Autumn

March is the first month of autumn. It is generally the last of the dry months. It can still get pretty hot so keep the watering up and all the mulch in the garden pretty thick as evaporation rates are still very high.

Be careful not to overwater fruit trees. Lack of water will stress the tree but too much will badly affect the next season's crop and produce unwanted leafy growth. Remove any dead wood and old fruit.

This is the ideal time to plant native shrubs, trees, and vines, and climbing plants like passionfruit while the ground is still warm.

The days are getting shorter now and the sun is lower in the sky. Around the 21st March the Autumn Equinox occurs. This is when both day and night are of equal length. This is a good time to fertilise all your fruit trees and vegies preferably with organic manure and compost. In fact everything in the garden will benefit from a feed and some attention!

It's a fun time in the produce garden as plenty of fruit and vegetables are ready to harvest. Pick everything that's ripe. You can eat it fresh, give it to your friends or freeze and preserve any surplus and enjoy eating it out of season.

Late season stone fruits, berries, melons, figs, raisins, and pistachios are at the Farmers Market stalls. New season apples and pears are now available. You'll find pumpkins, tomatoes, eggplant, zucchini, capsicums and chillies at the Farmers Market and in your vegie garden if you've been clever!

Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater

Peter Peter pumpkin eater
Had a wife but couldn't keep her
He put her in a pumpkin shell
And there he kept her very well



There are many different types of pumpkins from the small Butternut to the large Queensland Blue. Most pumpkins are ready to harvest in autumn but it can be tricky to know when to pick them as they don't go soft when they are ripe and most don't change colour. However Butternuts do change colour and will ripen to a pale orangey yellow. A good rule of thumb is to wait till the vine starts to die off and the stem attached to the pumpkin withers and goes brown.

When your pumpkins are ready to pick keep the stalks on as they make great handles to carry them around with! The sunny roof of a corrugated iron shed is a good place to store pumpkins. Place pumpkins on their sides so the rainwater runs off and doesn't collect in the well at the top. Eventually the skins will harden and cure after a few weeks and they can be moved to a cool, dry, airy spot undercover.



What to plant now

- Artichokes
- Beetroot
- Broccoli
- Broad Beans
- Brussel Sprouts
- Cabbages
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Kale
- Leeks
- Mizuna
- Onions
- Pak Choi
- Parsnips
- Peas
- Radishes
- Rainbow Chard
- Shallots
- Silver Beet
- Spinach
- Swedes
- Turnips

Autumn is a mellow time of year climate wise. Not too hot, not too cold, not too wet and not too dry. This is a terrific growing combo, the day temperatures are mild and night temperatures cool and refreshing. The soil is still warm after summer which makes it perfect for rapid and successful plant growth. So get digging, plant those vegies and if you stick in some seedlings you'll be picking greens within a few weeks!

Herbs

Plant your favourite herbs now such as parsley, sage, rosemary, oregano, thyme and chives. Most herbs will do well in pots and can be placed in a sunny spot near your kitchen door for easy access. Freshly cut herbs are a welcome addition to any meal.

Fruit trees

March is a good time to think about planting fruit trees. Research what you would like and order from reputable nurseries. Plan and prepare your planting holes now. Holes should be at least 60cm deep. Dwarf fruit trees are now available for small city gardens and large pots.

