

****ASK THE TAFE TEAM****

**With TAFE Queensland South West Horticulture Teacher, Paul Luck
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Question: *What vegetables can I plant this time of year in the Ipswich area?*

Answer: Subtropical gardeners must often sort through advice about vegetable planting in southern parts of the country. Summer in the subtropics is warm and humid so don't bother planting things like iceberg lettuce because they will run to seed almost immediately. The winter months are mainly dry and cool so this is the best time for veggie growing because the climatic conditions are working in the subtropical gardener's favour.

However, it's time for heat loving plants like okra, rosella, snake beans and eggplant or sweetcorn, capsicums, chillies, pumpkins and melons to shine. Make sure to read the pack to check for the best heat loving varieties. Some shade cloth will protect those sensitive veggies in the hottest parts of the day. Alternatively, large containers in a suitable position may be a way of keeping some salad ingredients going over the summer.

To get good vegetables you must make sure to get your soil right. Lots of compost dug into the garden will give your plants a flying start. Don't forget to check the soil for acidity. The best way to do this is to do a pH test. Most vegetables prefer to grow in a pH range of 6 to 6.5. Once the pH is right, add an organic fertiliser. Use one with plenty of potash, spread it evenly over the ground and rake it in.

Some more suggestions we have for subtropical vegetable growing include peas, dwarf beans and carrots. You can also try mignonette lettuce seedlings (rather than the hearting varieties), broccoli (though it will seed quickly), sugar loaf cabbage, and beetroot. Plant them as either seedlings or seeds.

Keeping up the watering and fertilising of plants is also an important maintenance task during the establishment of your vegetables. When planting ensure to give all plants sufficient space for growth; this will depend on the variety of vegetable. Monitor your vegetables after planting for pests and diseases. Fungal diseases such as powdery mildew can be prevalent on vegetables particularly in humid conditions; also pests such as white cabbage butterfly can be more active in the warm humid summer months, especially after a good downpour of rain.

We hope you have a great harvest.

For more information about TAFE Queensland South West's horticulture and landscaping offerings or for any other courses, please visit www.tafesouthwest.edu.au or call 1300 914 754.

Disclaimer: The comments provided in this article are general in nature only and are not a substitute for professional advice. The author accepts no responsibility for any action taken by a reader in relation to this article.

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