

7 Crops good for Dry Gardening

Dry gardening is not for every crop. Shallow-rooted crops such as lettuce and smaller greens might be more difficult to grow in a dry gardening situation. Here are a few good crops that do well when rain is sparse.

- **Tomatoes**
Members of the nightshade family tend to be sun-loving crops that do better in drier climates so long as they are established first. They need rain or watering for the first few weeks to thrive and a mulch to help retain moisture, but they do well in dry spells. Yields might be lower, but the flavor will be unparalleled.
- **Peppers**
Another nightshade, peppers can do well in a dry garden if you take the time to establish them. Keep them well mulched, but expect delicious peppers throughout the summer.
- **Eggplant**
Like peppers and tomatoes, eggplants are built for summer production. They also need a fair amount of moisture to get established. Buy drought-tolerant varieties, keep them mulched and you will enjoy eggplant all summer.
- **Potatoes**
The beauty of potatoes in a dry garden is that they are typically planted early enough in the year that they can take advantage of the spring rainfall. Once they are established, make sure the potatoes stay well-cultivated—as weeds will drink up the water—and mulch them if you can.
- **Sweet Potatoes**
One of the most robust summer crops, sweet potatoes can really handle the heat. Sweet potatoes are started from tender slips so make sure they go into a ground with sufficient moisture. The plants will grow fast and create their own ground cover to preserve moisture. They are a perfect summer crop.
- **Okra**
Known for its heat and drought-tolerance, okra is an excellent crop for dry gardening. Mulch will certainly help it to thrive in the drier months, but okra can handle a fair amount of heat and water stress before it really starts to diminish.
- **Garlic**
Garlic is perhaps the easiest of all dry gardened crops as it grows throughout the winter, which is the wettest season. Planted in the fall and harvested in the late spring, garlic can often be hauled out before the dry weather arrives. Mulching is recommended to keep weeds down and preserve moisture for those last few months. There is no reason to skip this crop in a dry garden.

Alas, hot, dry summers will either thwart your chances of decent results from our vegetable gardens or necessitate considerable effort applying prodigious quantities of water. Tap water takes a lot of energy to treat and distribute and can prove expensive. While longer, hotter, and dryer summers are an increasing phenomenon the more we can do to reduce our reliance on the tap the better.