

A Piedmont Garden Calendar:

Veggies and Cover Crops for All Seasons

As the saying goes, ‘timing is everything’ – and this is especially true in gardening! Planting crops at the right time is essential for healthy plants and a good harvest. Tomatoes planted too early will get zapped by a late-spring frost; broccoli planted in the heat of summer will flower and turn bitter. To help you avoid these common mistakes, the table below shows planting dates for **Spring, Summer, and Fall vegetables**. Crops are grouped by family to help with rotation planning. The back of this handout shows planting dates for **summer and winter cover crops** (planted to improve the soil), as well as **sample rotation plans**.

Vegetable Planting by Season & Family

SPRING VEGGIES:

- Start seeds indoors in **mid-December to mid-February**. Alliums need 8-12 weeks indoors before transplanting; Brassicas and chard need 5-8 weeks.
- Sow seeds outdoors & plant transplants in **mid-February to mid-April**

Transplants:

- **Alliums:** Leeks, Onions, Scallions (sets)
- **Brassicas:** Bok choy, Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Collards, Kale
- **Chenopods:** Chard



Direct seeding:

- **Aster family:** Lettuce
- **Apiaceae Family:** Carrots
- **Brassicas:** Kohlrabi, Mustard, Radishes, Turnips
- **Chenopods:** Chard, Spinach, Beets
- **Legumes:** Peas



SUMMER VEGGIES:

- Start seeds in **mid-February to mid-April**. Solanaceous crops need 6-8 weeks before transplanting. If you use transplants for Cucurbits (rather than direct seeding), they only need 4-5 weeks.
- Sow seeds outdoors & plant transplants in **mid-April to mid-June** (Solanaceous crops and okra) or **mid-April to mid-July** (Cucurbit crops). Beans can be planted through early September.

Transplants:

- **Cucurbits:** Cucumber, Melon, Pumpkin, Summer Squash & Winter Squash
- **Solanaceae Family:** Tomato, Pepper, Eggplant



Direct seeding:

- **Cucurbits:** Cucumber, Melon, Pumpkin, Summer Squash & Winter Squash
- **Legumes:** Beans
- **Mallow Family:** Okra



FALL VEGGIES: Start seeds in **mid-June to mid-July**. Sow seeds outdoors & plant transplants in **early August to mid-September**. Several crops can be planted through late September, including lettuce, spinach, and peas.

Transplants:

- **Brassicas:** Bok choy, Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Collards, Kale
- **Chenopods:** Chard

Direct seeding:

- **Aster family:** Lettuce (thru late Sept)
- **Brassicas:** Kohlrabi, Mustard, Radishes, Turnips
- **Chenopods:** Spinach (thru late Sept), Beets
- **Legumes:** Peas (thru late Sept)

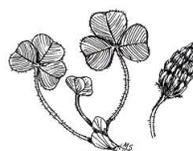
Cover Crop Seasonal Niches

Cover crops are close-growing crops planted in rotation with food crops to enrich the soil and provide other benefits, such as smothering weeds. Cover crops in the legume family (e.g., peas, clovers, and vetches) also contribute fixed nitrogen to the garden for future food crops, once legume residues are returned to the soil. Before planting the next vegetable crop, cover crops can be cut and left as mulch on the soil surface, or turned in to the soil.

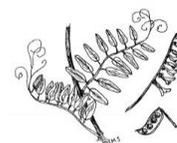
For more detailed information on cover crops, visit <http://forsythcommunitygardening.com> and explore the resources on “Building Healthy Soil.”

OVER-WINTERING COVER CROPS: Plant in **September & October** (you can ‘inter-seed’ beneath & between vegetables if needed). Cut down at flowering in **mid-April to early May**, before planting summer vegetables.

- **Crimson Clover** (legume): Seed in mid-September
- **Hairy Vetch** (legume): Seed in late September - October
- **Rye & Hairy Vetch** (grass/legume mixture): Seed in late September - October



Crimson clover



Hairy vetch



Winter rye

SUMMER COVER CROPS: Seed after early spring crops in **May – June**. Cut down in **August** before fall crops. Be sure to cut down buckwheat once it starts flowering and before it sets seed.

- **Buckwheat** (nonlegume)



Buckwheat

Rotation Planning

Be sure to **rotate to vegetables in a different plant family each year**, to avoid building up soil-borne diseases and pests, and to replenish nutrients after heavy-feeding crops. Below are example rotation plans.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Spring Veggie: <i>Ex: peas</i>	(over-wintering cover crop – cut down in April-May)	Spring Veggie: <i>Ex: spinach or beets</i>	Spring Veggie: <i>Ex: lettuces, salad greens</i>
Summer Veggie: <i>Ex: tomato or pepper</i>	Summer Veggie: <i>Ex: cucumber or zucchini</i>	Summer veggie: <i>Ex: string beans</i>	Summer Cover Crop: <i>Ex: buckwheat/ crimson clover</i>
Over-wintering Cover Crop: <i>Ex: rye/ hairy vetch</i>	Fall Veggie: <i>Ex: kale</i>	Winter-kill Cover Crop: <i>Ex: oats & field peas</i>	Fall Veggie: <i>Ex: broccoli or cauliflower</i>

References (recommended for more detailed charts of planting dates and cultural practices):

Bass, L., C. Mauney, and D. Morris. Home Vegetable Gardening: Variety Selection Quick Reference Guide for Forsyth County. NC Cooperative Extension -- Forsyth County Center. http://www.forsythcommunitygardening.com/Documents/Vegetable_Planting_Guide.pdf

Driscoll, E. and C. Gunter. Vegetable Planting Guide for School Gardens in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain of North Carolina. North Carolina Cooperative Extension. <http://www.nccgp.org/resources/detail/school-garden-veggie-planting-guide-piedmont-coastal-plain>

Cover Crop Drawings by Marianne Sarrantonio, from: <http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Books/Managing-Cover-Crops-Profitably-3rd-Edition>.