

Grow Through Fall: The GoHealthy Fall Garden Guide

A practical September-November planting plan for Columbia, South Carolina and warmer Southeastern gardens.

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
Seed fast roots. Set out hardy greens. Keep seedbeds evenly moist.	Succession sow. Mulch after plants establish. Add garlic and onions.	Protect tender greens. Keep planting garlic. Harvest from the outside in.

MADE FOR COLUMBIA + THE WARMER SOUTHEAST	14 crops containers succession plan printable calendar
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Use the calendar as a window, not a promise.

Richland County is listed in Clemson Cooperative Extension's Coastal Plain gardening region. The planting windows in this guide start with Clemson's South Carolina chart, then add practical detail from Clemson and NC State Extension guidance for warm fall gardens.

Weather, variety, shade, soil moisture and your exact yard can move a planting date. Aim for the middle of a recommended window when possible. At the edges, use a fast-maturing variety, close attention and season protection.

THE KEY IDEA

Fall success starts earlier than the first cool morning. Many crops need enough time to establish before short days and cold soil slow their growth.

Three ways to start

CODE	WHAT IT MEANS	BEST USE
S	Direct sow seed in the garden or container.	Radish, carrot, beet, turnip, mustard, spinach, cilantro
T	Set out a nursery or home-grown transplant.	Kale, collards, bok choy, lettuce, parsley
C	Plant a clove, set or small bulb.	Garlic and green onions
P	Plant with protection and expect more risk.	Late sowings under row cover or in a cold frame

Before you buy seed

- Read the days-to-maturity number and choose quicker varieties for late plantings.
- Choose a site with about six hours of direct sun when possible. Leafy crops can tolerate some partial shade.
- Keep a light row cover ready. It can reduce insect pressure early and extend the season later.
- Write down the planting date. A garden log turns one season into useful local knowledge for the next.

Reset the summer bed in one focused session.

1. Clear with purpose Remove spent plants, roots and weeds. Compost healthy material. Bag or otherwise dispose of clearly diseased plants so problems are not carried into the next crop.	2. Look before you feed Use a soil test to guide lime and fertilizer. A dark soil color does not reveal pH or nutrient balance, and more fertilizer is not automatically better.
3. Open the surface Work only when soil is moist but not sticky. Loosen compacted areas, break large clods and rake the top into a fine, level seedbed for small seeds.	4. Add finished compost If the bed needs organic matter, spread a modest layer of finished compost and mix it into the surface. Avoid fresh manure around an actively planted food garden.
5. Water before planting Moisten dry soil before sowing tiny seed. After planting, use a gentle spray so seed stays in place and the surface does not crust.	6. Map the next crop Rotate plant families when space allows. Keep tall crops to the north side so they do not shade shorter greens and roots.

ONE-BED STARTER

In a 4-by-8-foot bed, reserve one strip for repeated leaf lettuce and radishes, one for kale or collards, one for carrots or beets, and one October-November corner for garlic or green onions.

A five-item setup

- Finished compost, if your soil needs it
- A watering wand or hose nozzle with a gentle setting
- Plant labels and a weatherproof marker
- Lightweight row cover plus clips, bricks or garden staples
- Straw, shredded leaves or another clean organic mulch

Your September-November game plan.

MONTH	PLANT	MAINTAIN	WATCH
September	Kale, collards, mustard, bok choy, lettuce, spinach, radishes, carrots, beets, turnips, cilantro, parsley and green onions.	Keep newly sown beds evenly moist. Shade the seedbed temporarily during a hot spell. Thin roots before they crowd.	Heat, flea beetles, cabbage worms and soil crusting. Carrot, beet, turnip and radish windows close early.
October	Kale and collards through the month; mustard and spinach early; lettuce; cilantro and parsley; garlic and green onions.	Begin mulch after plants establish. Continue small lettuce or herb sowings only while they fit the local window.	Shorter days slow growth. Use faster varieties for late starts and set row cover before cold nights.
November	Garlic all month; green onion sets or plants early to midmonth; parsley or cilantro only as a protected experiment; lettuce only at the very start of the month.	Harvest outer leaves, remove yellow foliage and water during dry stretches. Keep covers ventilated on warm afternoons.	Cold snaps, waterlogged pots and roots sitting in poorly drained soil.

START NOW?

In mid-September, you are still in a strong local window for many greens and quick roots. Prioritize carrots immediately, then beets, turnips and radishes, followed by greens and herbs.

Planting order when time is tight

- First: direct sow the crops with the shortest local window - carrots, beets, radishes and turnips.
- Second: set out kale, collard, bok choy and lettuce transplants so they gain size quickly.
- Third: direct sow mustard and spinach, then cilantro and parsley as heat eases.
- Last: hold garlic until October. Plant green onions from sets or plants from late September into fall.

Six leafy greens for a long harvest.

CROP	COLUMBIA-AREA WINDOW	START + SPACE	HARVEST APPROACH
Kale	Aug 1-Oct 30	S or T; 6-12 in	Pick outer leaves once plants are established; leave the center growing.
Collards	Aug 1-Oct 30	T preferred in Sep; 12-18 in	Harvest lower leaves or cut baby leaves more densely.
Mustard greens	Aug 1-Oct 15	S; thin to 4-6 in	Cut baby leaves early or harvest outer mature leaves.
Bok choy	Best in Sep; protect later starts	T or S; 7-12 in	Harvest baby heads early or full heads before bolting or deep cold.
Leaf lettuce	Sep 5-Nov 1	S or T; 6-10 in	Cut outer leaves or shear baby leaf above the crown for regrowth.
Spinach	Aug 15-Oct 15	S; thin to 4-6 in	Pick outer leaves; protect tender growth during freezes.

Keep greens productive

- Water at soil level when possible. Even moisture supports tender leaves and reduces stress.
- Inspect leaf undersides for caterpillars and egg clusters. Hand-pick small infestations and use insect netting or row cover early.
- Thin seedlings instead of letting them compete. Eat clean, healthy thinnings as baby greens.
- For repeat harvests, remove only a portion of the outer leaves and protect the center growing point.

BOK CHOY NOTE

Clemson's chart does not list bok choy. The timing here is adapted from NC State's central-region calendar and should be treated as a warm-Southeast trial: use quick varieties, transplants and protection for late starts.

Four roots that reward careful timing.

CROP	LOCAL WINDOW	DEPTH + FINAL SPACE	SUCCESS MOVE
Radishes	Aug 1-Sep 30	1/2 in deep; 1-2 in apart	Sow a short row, then another 7-10 days later while the window is open.
Carrots	Sep 1-Sep 15	1/4 in deep; 1-2 in apart	Keep the surface consistently damp until emergence; choose a short or quick variety.
Beets	Aug 15-Sep 30	3/4 in deep; 2-4 in apart	Each seed cluster may produce several seedlings, so thin promptly.
Turnips	Aug 1-Sep 30	1/2 in deep; 2-4 in apart	Grow closer for greens and wider for roots; harvest roots before they become woody.

The loose-soil rule

Roots need a smooth, stone-free seedbed. Do not add a fresh layer of high-nitrogen fertilizer just before planting; use your soil-test result and focus on even moisture, correct thinning and enough depth.

Keep seed in place Use a gentle watering spray. A hard stream can expose seed or wash it into clumps.	Do not let the crust win During warm, dry weather, check the surface daily until seedlings emerge. A light cover of fine compost can help, but do not bury tiny seed too deeply.
Thin on time Snip extras at soil level if pulling would disturb nearby roots. Crowded carrots and beets rarely size well.	Mark the row Mix a few radish seeds into a slow carrot row or label it clearly so you do not weed out delayed seedlings.

LATE START?

After the prime root-crop window, shift your space toward transplants, garlic and green onions. A protected late experiment can work, but shorter days make the result less predictable.

Herbs and alliums carry the garden forward.

CROP	WHEN	HOW	USEFUL DETAIL
Cilantro	Direct sow late Sep-Oct; protected trial into early Nov	Sow 1/4-1/2 in deep; thin to 2-4 in	Make small repeat sowings because cilantro has a shorter harvest window.
Parsley	Sow or transplant in fall	Transplants are faster; seed can take 2-4 weeks	Keep the seedbed moist and be patient. Parsley is cold hardy once established.
Garlic	Oct 1-Nov 30	Plant individual cloves pointed end up, about 2 in deep and 4-6 in apart	Use named planting garlic, not treated ornamental bulbs. Harvest in late spring or early summer.
Green onions	Sets Sep 15-Nov 15; plants Oct 1-Nov 15; seed Sep 15-Oct 30	Plant sets about 1-2 in apart	Harvest young or leave them to size. Use a container if bed space is limited.

NOVEMBER ANCHOR

Garlic is the most dependable November planting in this guide. Green onions can continue into midmonth from sets or plants. Treat late herbs as protected experiments, not guaranteed crops.

A simple kitchen-herb container

- Use a container at least 10 inches deep with unobstructed drainage holes.
- Plant parsley toward the center and cilantro in two small sections sown two weeks apart.
- Add green onions along the edge, leaving room for airflow.
- Place it near the kitchen in bright light and check moisture with a fingertip before watering.
- If a hard freeze is forecast, move a manageable pot to a protected, unheated location or cover it.

A fall garden can fit on a porch.

CROP GROUP	MINIMUM SOIL DEPTH	STARTING POINT
Leaf lettuce, spinach, mustard	6-8 in	Wide window box or bowl; harvest as baby leaves.
Radish, green onion	6-8 in	Use a broad container for several short rows.
Kale, collards, bok choy	10-12 in	One full-size plant per 2-3 gallon pot, or grow baby leaves more densely.
Beets and turnips	10-12 in	Choose a container wide enough for spacing and do not crowd roots.
Carrots	12 in or deeper	Match the pot depth to the mature root; short varieties fit best.
Cilantro and parsley	8-10 in	Use a wide pot for repeated cilantro sowings.
Garlic	8-10 in	Space cloves 4-6 in apart in a deep, well-drained container.

Five non-negotiables

- Drainage holes: excess water must escape. Never let a food crop sit in a water-filled saucer.
- Potting mix: use a clean mix made for containers, not dense garden soil dug from the yard.
- Enough light: aim for six hours of sun, while using afternoon shade to help tender leafy crops during lingering heat.
- Consistent water: containers dry faster than beds. Check small pots daily during warm or windy weather.
- Easy movement: use lightweight containers or a rolling caddy if you expect to move plants for frost protection.

CONTAINER TIP

Combine crops with similar moisture needs. A kale plant can outgrow and shade tiny companions, so give large greens their own pot or harvest neighbors as baby leaves.

Plant a little, then plant a little more.

WEEK	QUICK LANE	LEAFY LANE	LONGER LANE
Sep 5	Radish + leaf lettuce	Mustard + spinach	Carrots + beets + turnips
Sep 19	Radish + leaf lettuce	Mustard + bok choy	Beets + turnips; local carrot window has closed
Oct 3	Leaf lettuce	Mustard + spinach	Kale + collard transplants
Oct 17	Leaf lettuce	Kale + collard transplants	Garlic + green onion sets
Oct 31	Final local lettuce window	Protected cilantro or parsley trial	Garlic + green onion sets
Nov 14	Harvest and protect	Harvest and protect	Garlic + final green onion sets/plants

How to use the lanes

- Choose only the crops your household will eat. This is a model, not a requirement to plant every cell.
- Use short rows or small blocks. Label each sowing with crop, variety and date.
- Repeat fast crops every 7-14 days and leafy crops every 2-3 weeks only while the local planting window remains open.
- If an earlier sowing fails in heat, replant promptly rather than waiting for a full bed to look perfect.
- Stop repeating when days are too short for the crop to establish. Switch that space to garlic, onions, mulch or a cover crop.

WHY IT WORKS

Succession planting spreads harvests and risk. One sowing may meet a heat wave or heavy rain, while the next catches better weather.

Mulch, water and protect without overdoing it.

Mulch after emergence Once seedlings are visible and transplants are settled, apply a light layer of clean straw, shredded leaves or finished compost. Keep mulch off stems and plant crowns.	Water the root zone New seed needs frequent light moisture. Established crops prefer a deeper drink followed by time for the surface to dry. Check soil before watering.
Cover early for insects Light insect netting or row cover can shield leafy crops from cabbage moths and flea beetles. Secure every edge and inspect plants before covering.	Cover late for cold Use spun-woven row cover or a cold frame when freezing weather threatens. Remove or vent protection on warm, sunny days to avoid excess heat.
Scout twice a week Look under leaves for eggs, caterpillars and aphids. Check the soil line for slugs and remove badly damaged or diseased leaves.	Harvest on purpose Pick greens from the outside in, pull roots at useful size and harvest before damage spreads. Regular picking keeps the garden visible and manageable.

The 10-minute fall check

CHECK	QUESTION	ACTION
Moisture	Is the top inch dry?	Water gently and deeply if the root zone needs it.
Leaves	Any holes, eggs, webbing or sticky residue?	Identify before treating; hand-pick when practical.
Crowding	Are seedlings touching too soon?	Thin to the crop's final spacing.
Weather	Heat wave, hard rain or freeze ahead?	Shade, cover, move containers or adjust watering.
Harvest	What is ready now?	Pick it, label it and plan the next sowing.

A simple Columbia-area fall calendar.

Codes: S = direct sow, T = transplant, C = clove/set/plant, P = protected trial. Blank cells fall outside the primary guidance used for this guide.

CROP	SEP 1-15	SEP 16-30	OCT 1-15	OCT 16-31	NOV 1-15	NOV 16-30
Kale	S/T	S/T	S/T	S/T	P	
Collards	S/T	S/T	S/T	S/T	P	
Mustard	S	S	S			
Bok choy	S/T	S/T	P			
Lettuce	S/T from 9/5	S/T	S/T	S/T	to 11/1	P
Spinach	S	S	S		P	
Radishes	S	S				
Carrots	S					
Beets	S	S				
Turnips	S	S				
Cilantro	late S	S	S	S	P	
Parsley	late S/T	S/T	S/T	S/T	P	P
Garlic			C	C	C	C
Green onions	from 9/15	C/S	C/S	C/S	C to 11/15	

PRINT + MARK IT

Circle what you plan to grow, write the variety beside the crop and cross out each sowing after it is planted. Dates are starting points; weather and garden conditions still decide the day.

Warm-Southeast adjustment

Farther south or near the coast, some fall windows may continue longer. Farther north, at higher elevation or in a cold pocket, start earlier. Use your local Extension calendar before shifting these dates.

Turn this fall into next year's local guide.

CROP + VARIETY	PLANTED	FIRST HARVEST	WHAT I LEARNED

Sources used

Clemson Cooperative Extension, Planning a Garden (HGIC 1256): hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/planning-a-garden/

Clemson Cooperative Extension, Fall and Winter Vegetables: hgic.clemson.edu/fall-and-winter-vegetables/

Clemson Cooperative Extension, Herbs: hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/herbs/

NC State Extension, Central North Carolina Planting Calendar for Annual Vegetables, Fruits, and Herbs: content.ces.ncsu.edu/central-north-carolina-planting-calendar-for-annual-vegetables-fruits-and-herbs

Sources reviewed September 15, 2026. GoHealthySC is not affiliated with or endorsed by Clemson University or NC State University.

LOCAL HELP

For a soil test, pest identification or a crop question, contact Clemson Cooperative Extension in Richland County or use Clemson's Home and Garden Information Center.

Important note

This guide is general educational information for home gardeners. Planting dates are guidelines, not guarantees. Weather, cultivar, pests, soil and microclimate affect results. Follow current product labels exactly and use local Extension guidance before applying any pesticide, fertilizer or soil amendment.

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