

Preparing for Fall: Garden & Homestead Checklist

A beginning-of-fall plan for cooler-weather beds, seeds, herbs, compost and tools. Written for South Carolina households; adjust planting dates to your location and forecast.

1 / Walk the garden and choose your beds

- ☐ Sketch the space: note where sun reaches the beds and where water collects after rain.
- ☐ Harvest ripe summer crops; remove spent plants and weeds before they set more seed.
- ☐ Set aside visibly diseased plant material; follow local Extension advice before composting it.
- ☐ Choose one bed for fall greens and one for roots or herbs rather than starting too much.
- ☐ Take a representative soil sample and use Clemson Extension results to plan amendments.
- ☐ Top beds with mature compost if appropriate; avoid adding fertilizer or lime by guesswork.
- ☐ Check irrigation; fall beds still need moisture even as temperatures cool.

2 / Plan a cooler-weather crop mix

- ☐ Select two quick crops such as radishes, lettuce or mustard greens.
- ☐ Select two longer crops such as kale, collards, carrots or beets.
- ☐ Check Clemson planting windows for your part of South Carolina and your actual first frost pattern.
- ☐ Reserve seed for a small follow-up sowing to spread harvests over several weeks.
- ☐ Keep mulch ready to cover bare soil and reduce soil splash on leafy greens.

Bed plan / crop and sowing date:

3 / Save seeds with a record

- ☐ Choose healthy plants with fully mature seed; start with easy dry seed such as beans.
- ☐ Dry seed thoroughly, remove chaff, then label crop, variety, location and harvest year.
- ☐ Keep labeled seed dry, cool and protected from moisture; check storage guidance by crop.
- ☐ Remember hybrid seed may not grow true to type next year.

4 / Give tools and compost a fall reset

- ☐ Brush soil from hand tools; wash and dry tools before storing.
- ☐ Inspect pruners and edges; sharpen if needed and store dry and safely.
- ☐ Separate healthy spent plants for compost; exclude problem material per Extension guidance.
- ☐ Mix dry leaves with fresh green scraps, keep the pile moist, and turn as needed.
- ☐ Cover exposed beds with mulch or a suitable cover crop where no crop is growing.

5 / Start a small windowsill herb garden

- ☐ Pick one or two herbs you cook with often, such as parsley or chives.
- ☐ Use a pot with drainage and a saucer; give herbs the bright light they need.
- ☐ Water when the potting mix calls for it rather than on a rigid schedule.
- ☐ Label pots and clip modestly once established; inspect for pests regularly.

Seeds kept / tool repairs / compost additions:

6 / Weekly five-minute garden check

- ☐ Check the weather forecast, soil moisture and any signs of pests or disease.
- ☐ Harvest greens and herbs while tender; use them in this week's meals.
- ☐ Record which seeds emerged, which bed needs mulch and what to sow next.
- ☐ Put one garden harvest into a soup, bowl or freezer plan before it wilts.

Garden log

WEEK OF: _____ BED / CONTAINER: _____

What grew, what needs attention, and next sowing:

Reliable references

Clemson Extension fall and winter vegetables: <https://hgic.clemson.edu/fall-and-winter-vegetables/>

Clemson Extension raised beds: <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/raised-beds/>

Clemson Extension soil testing: <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/soil-testing/>

University of Minnesota Extension seed saving: <https://extension.umn.edu/planting-and-growing-guides/saving-vegetable-seeds>

Dates and soil amendments vary by place and soil test; check your local Extension office.