

In The Dirt: August NC

August in the NC Piedmont/Foothills is really the start of fall gardening — the heat is still around, but we're planting for a fall harvest before frost (average first frost around late October/early November for your area). Here's the breakdown:

Direct-seed early August (still warm, race against the calendar):

- Bush snap beans (last call — need ~55 days before frost)
- Summer squash (fast producer, can still sneak one more round in)
- Cucumbers (pickling types especially, quick to mature)

Direct-seed all month — prime fall crops:

- Collards
- Kale
- Turnips
- Beets
- Carrots (soil's cooling a bit, germination gets easier)
- Swiss chard
- Mustard Greens
- Rutabaga
- Radishes (quick 25-30 day crop, can do multiple rounds)

Start seeds now for transplanting later this month/September:

- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Brussels sprouts (These do best started in trays or a shaded nursery bed in August heat, then moved to the garden once they have a few true leaves — direct-seeding them now often leads to bolting or poor germination.)

Wait until late August/September to direct-seed:

- Lettuce and spinach — still too hot early in the month; both bolt or fail to germinate above ~80°F soil temp. Late August with some afternoon shade, or wait for September, works better.

Practical notes carried over from July, still relevant:

- Keep seedbeds consistently moist - daily watering may be needed for fine seeds like carrots and beets until they germinate.
- A light row cover or shade cloth over new seedbeds helps a lot with germination in August heat.
- Mid-to-late August is really the "money window" for getting your fall greens and root crops established before day length shortens too much.