

In The Dirt: October NC

October in the NC Piedmont/Foothills is mostly about wrapping up direct-seeding — the window closes fast as days shorten and frost approaches (typically late Oct to early Nov for your area).

Direct-seed early October only (fast crops, race the frost):

- Radishes (25-30 days, still doable first couple weeks)
- Spinach (cold-hardy, can handle a light frost after germinating)
- Lettuce (loose-leaf types especially, with row cover protection likely needed)
- Arugula
- Asian greens (mizuna, tatsoi — quick and frost-tolerant)

Garlic and shallots — this is THE month:

- Plant garlic cloves and shallot sets in October, ideally 4-6 weeks before your ground really cold-sets. This is the single best "seed" (well, clove/set) planting task of the month.

Cover crops — still a great October task:

- Crimson clover, winter rye, hairy vetch, or a mix — seed these on any beds finishing up for the season. October is prime cover-crop planting time.

Don't direct-seed anymore this month:

- Beets, carrots, turnips, kale, collards, which need more days to mature than October daylight and warmth allow. If you want a harvest, these should've gone in by mid-September.

Transplants only (not seed) if you want more greens:

- Small transplants of spinach, lettuce, or kale from trays can still go in early October and finish under row cover, but this is transplanting, not seeding.

Practical notes:

- Frost protection becomes essential - row cover, cold frames, or low tunnels will extend what you can grow.
- Soil temps are dropping fast; germination slows down noticeably by mid-to-late month.
- This is really the hinge point between "still planting" and "protecting what's already growing" - by November you're mostly in maintenance/overwintering mode rather than seeding.

Since October is really the garlic-planting month, that could make for a good hands-on Kids Lesson. Garlic is satisfying, low-effort, and ties nicely into "plant now, harvest in summer" education.