

In The Dirt: September NC

September in the NC Piedmont/Foothills is the last real push for fall/winter crops before it gets too cold to germinate seed outdoors. First frost is typically late October to early November for your area, so timing shifts toward quick-maturing and cold-hardy crops.

Direct-seed early September (last chance for warm-ish crops):

- Bush snap beans (only very early Sept, need warm soil and ~50-55 frost-free days)
- Summer squash (early Sept only, quick varieties)

Direct-seed all month — cool-season crops that thrive now:

- Lettuce (finally! Soil's cooled enough, germination is much easier)
- Spinach (great time to start, handles light frost well)
- Radishes (fast 25-30 days, can do 2-3 successions this month)
- Turnips
- Beets (early September is better than late, needs time before hard frost)
- Carrots (early Sept only — they need 70+ days, cutting it close later in the month)
- Mustard greens
- Arugula
- Asian greens (bok choy, tatsoi, mizuna — fast and cold-tolerant)
- Kale (still fine early month)
- Collards (early month, need more days than kale)

Transplant out (don't direct-seed) this month:

- Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts — if you started these from seed in August, September is transplant time. Direct-seeding them now is too late for most varieties to head up before frost.

Garlic and shallots:

- Not quite yet — hold off until October/November for garlic in your zone. Too early in September and it'll put on too much top growth before winter.

Cover crops (great September task):

- If any beds are finishing up and going fallow for winter, this is a good time to seed crimson clover, winter rye, or hairy vetch to protect and build soil.

Practical notes:

- Soil temps are dropping into the sweet spot for germination, so watering demands ease up compared to July/August.
- Day length is shortening fast after the equinox (~Sept 22), so anything planted very late in the month grows more slowly — favor the faster-maturing varieties as you get toward October.
- Row cover becomes useful again at month's end, this time for frost protection rather than heat/shade.