

In The Dirt: March NC

March in the NC Piedmont/Foothills is the real start of the outdoor growing season — still cool and frost is possible (last frost typically mid-April), so this month is almost entirely cool-season direct-seeding, done with an eye on the calendar.

Direct-seed all month — cold-hardy crops (frost-tolerant):

- Peas (English, snap, snow) — March is the classic pea-planting month
- Spinach
- Lettuce
- Radishes
- Turnips
- Kale
- Collards
- Mustard greens
- Arugula
- Carrots (soil's cool but workable, good germination this month)
- Beets

Direct-seed toward late March (a bit more frost-sensitive, but usually fine):

- Swiss chard
- Onion seed (if not using sets/transplants)

Not yet — wait until April or May:

- Beans, squash, cucumbers, corn, okra, melons — soil's still too cold, and a late frost would kill them anyway.

Also a March task (not seed, but timely):

- Seed potatoes — many gardeners plant these mid-to-late March in this region, about 2-4 weeks before last frost.
- Onion sets/transplants, if not direct-seeding.

Practical notes:

- Soil workability matters more than air temp this month — don't work wet clay soil (common in the Piedmont), as it compacts and hurts structure. Wait for it to dry out a bit after rain.

- A late frost or freeze is still likely in March, but everything on the cold-hardy list above handles that fine, some even improve in flavor with a light frost.
- This is a great "kick off the growing season" month, since peas and greens are satisfying, forgiving crops for beginners.