

In the Dirt: July NC

July in the NC Piedmont/Foothills (Zone 7b/8a) is a bit of a transition point — it's still hot, but you're on the front edge of fall planting season. Here's what you can direct-seed right now:

****Still good for succession planting (heat-tolerant): ****

- Southern peas (cowpeas/black-eyed peas)
- Okra
- Lima Beans
- Snap beans (bush type, for a late crop)
- Sweet corn (if you have ~70-80 frost-free days left)
- Winter squash and pumpkins (need to go in soon for fall harvest)
- Cucumbers (for a second flush)

****Start now for fall harvest (or these do great direct-sown): ****

- Collards
- Kale
- Turnips
- Beets
- Carrots (better late July into August when soil cools slightly)
- Swiss chard
- Rutabaga

****Wait a few weeks (late Aug–Sept) for these — too hot yet: ****

- Lettuce, spinach, radishes, broccoli, cabbage transplants — these bolt or fail to germinate well in July heat unless you shade the seedbed.

A few practical notes for this time of year:

- Soil temps are high, so for fine seeds like carrots and lettuce, keep the bed consistently moist (water twice a day if it's dry) or cover lightly with row cover/burlap until germination.

- **Mulch heavily** to keep roots cool.

- Wood
- Straw
- Rocks (light colored pea gravel can mineralize the soil and keep roots cool)

- For fall brassicas, many gardeners start seeds indoors or in a shaded nursery bed now and transplant them out in August.