



Watauga Co. School Garden Calendar by Holly Whitesides, Against the Grain & Richard Boylan, Watauga County Cooperative Extension

First Day of School

- If you planted a garden in the spring, you'll have summer squash, beans, tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, beets and carrots. Scout for pests; have the bean leaves been chewed by (Mexican Bean) beetles (*Epilachna varivestis*)? Are there worms on or in any of the tomatoes or peppers? Do some of the summer squash have soft, rotted tips from blossom end rot (due to a shortage of calcium)? Any of these problems can be the start a good lesson and a discussion of solutions.
- If you can get good healthy seedlings by mid-August, transplant **broccoli**. Plant in a bed with hoop supports and be prepared to put up row covers in case it gets below freezing before the plants head-up and are ready for harvest.
- Transplant **Chinese cabbage, kale, collards, and bok choy**. Plant in bed with hoop supports so you can cover with insect fabric (light weight row cover), as the flea beetles will riddle the leaves with holes. Later on, you can replace the insect fabric with heavier row covers and extend your harvests of these crops into cold weather.
- Direct seed **radishes** (both salad and winter/roasting types), **turnips, spinach, lettuce, leafy greens** (mustards and Asian greens), **beets** and **carrots**.
- Take **soil tests** of all garden plots. Soil test boxes and instructions are available for free from the Cooperative Extension office, and the analysis by the NCDA is free (except the cost of mailing the boxes to Raleigh) until the end of November (\$4 per sample after 12/1). If you plan to plant **fruit trees** in September, use the results of the soil tests to amend planting holes with any necessary lime, Phosphorus, and Potassium.

Labor Day through Halloween:

- Harvest winter squash and potatoes that were planted in the spring. **All winter squash should be harvested before a hard frost.**
- Harvest dried beans (when the pods are brown but before they split open) and corn (when silks dry back and corn cobs point down) and hang in the classroom to finish drying. Once everything is completely dry, take the beans out of their pods and remove the corn from the cob. The beans can be soaked, cooked and eaten and the corn can be ground and used in recipes as cornmeal.
- Transplant **strawberry plants**. Day neutral varieties such as Albion, Portola, and San Andreas are nice because you can get a crop in the spring and fall but fewer berries in the summer. Mulch heavily with straw between the plants to help smother weeds. These plants will occupy the bed for at least a whole other growing season (or two if you want and keep the weeds under control); no need to cover with row covers.
- Spread **compost** and/or plant **cover crops** in any beds that need a rest for the winter. In early September, you can choose from **grains** such as rye, wheat, or barley and legumes such as crimson clover and hairy vetch. Once it gets into October, cereal rye is the only cover crop that germinates reliably in the shorter days and cooler temperatures.
- Continue to direct seed **spinach, radishes** and **lettuce** every 2-3 weeks through the end of September.
- Plant **fruit trees** from mid-September through mid-October. Irrigate regularly until the ground freezes.
- Harvest and enjoy the harvest of your fall plantings of radishes, lettuce, beets, carrots and spinach.
- Cover any beds with row covers/frost blankets that still have growing crops in advance of freezes (generally mid October).
- Plant **garlic bulbs** and **onion sets** (after Halloween) and mulch heavily with straw-these crops will be in the ground until late June-mid July.

Veterans Day through Thanksgiving

- Head out to the garden on warm days to harvest the fall crops that remain in the garden beds

Christmas Break

- On warm days, spread compost on any empty beds. You can do this right on top of smaller garden debris. This is like putting the garden to bed for a long winter's nap!

New Years

- Review the garden plan from the previous growing season, create a plan for the upcoming growing season, make a list of needed supplies, brainstorm and research new crops, comb through seed catalogs and place seed orders. Most importantly, dream of spring!

MLK Day through Valentine's Day

- On warm days, head out to the garden and look for any signs of life like a change in the color of the cover crops from a dark, faded green to a brighter green. Do any remaining cleanup (disassembling trellis or pulling out larger garden debris to add to the compost pile)

Valentine's Day through Spring Break (late March)

- Start pepper and eggplant seeds (late February) and tomato and basil seeds (early/mid march) in a greenhouse or under lights in the classroom. Warm-season crops like these germinate best when you also have a heat-mat underneath the trays.
- Start perennial herbs like oregano, thyme, mint, chamomile and perennial pollinator plants like milkweed, black-eyed susans, etc.
- Start **broccoli, kale, chard, lettuce and collards** (early/mid march) in a **greenhouse**, under lights in the classroom, or in a raised garden bed with hoops and thick row cover (these plants will be used for bare root transplanting)
- Direct seed **lettuce, radishes** and **peas** directly into garden beds during the warm days of March (peas will need to be trellised in April)

Tax Day

- Transplant out cool weather crops like **broccoli, lettuce, kale, chard, and collards**.
- Direct seed **herbs** like cilantro and dill.
- Direct seed crops like **beets, carrots, and radishes**
- Set out onion sets or plants.
- Thin lettuce, radishes, beets, and peas if they come-up too thickly. The baby leaves and pea tendrils make a great salad!

May Day

- Direct-sow green beans, dried beans, sweet corn and dry corn. Because it is wind-pollinated, corn will work best when you can plant at least four rows together.
- Or if you plan to be away from the garden for the summer, try planting summer cover crops such as cowpeas and/or millet to feed the soil and control weeds while you are gone for the summer.

Last Day of School (May 25th)

- Transplant out warm season crops like tomatoes, peppers, and winter squash
- Direct seed beans, summer squash and more carrots and beets

Summer Break

- Harvest beans, summer squash, tomatoes, peppers and eggplant.
- Continue to sow summer squash, beans, carrots and beets.

SEED SAVING:

- Crops that are easy to save seed for beginners: tomatoes, peppers, beans, corn flowers. A good online resource: <http://www.howtosaveseeds.com/>