

# ZONE 9 FLORIDA Garden Plans



# Homestead Academy of Practical Skills ROADMAP

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# **ZONE 9 FLORIDA**

## Garden Plans

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Cover design & layout: Stacy Farrell & Jordan Mitchell

Published and printed by:

Home School Adventure Co.® | Food Prep Guide

P. O. Box 162

South Elgin, IL 60177

HomeschoolAdventure.com & FoodPrepGuide.com

# **ZONE 9**

# **FLORIDA**

## Garden Plans

Sample

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# Welcome to Food Prep Guide!

We are a team of women who are passionate about preserving old-world skills and passing them on to the next generation.

As fellow homeschoolers, we know the value of providing nutritious food for our children while teaching life skills that will serve them well into adulthood.

Florida's unique Zone 9 climate offers an incredible opportunity—you can grow fresh vegetables year-round! All of the information in this guide was written with that in mind.



**—Stacy & Jordan**

We also know you're likely juggling work, homeschool lessons, family meals, and household management. This guide works WITH your busy life—giving you clear monthly priorities, quick-reference charts, and practical garden layouts.

If you're new to our brand, you should know that three words characterize how we teach, and we believe they communicate what you can expect from all of our resources:

**FAITHFUL:** God can multiply our efforts like He did the widow's oil and wheat (1 Kings 17). Our trust in Jesus shapes everything we do here.

**FRUGAL:** True frugality means making thoughtful choices that honor our resources. We focus on strategies that maximize production while minimizing waste.

**EFFICIENT:** Time is limited—and so is brain space. We strive to share efficient management systems alongside every skill we teach.

We're glad you're here—let's get started!

# UNDERSTANDING ZONE 9

If you're new to gardening in Zone 9, you're about to discover both incredible advantages and some distinct challenges that will shape how you approach your vegetable garden throughout the year.

Zone 9 is defined by its average minimum winter temperatures, which range from 20°F to 30°F. This relatively mild winter climate means you can grow vegetables virtually year-round, with only brief interruptions from occasional frost events. You essentially get two full growing seasons each year instead of one!

The warm climate also opens doors to crops that simply won't survive in colder zones. Heat-loving vegetables like okra, sweet potatoes, and yard-long beans thrive here, giving you access to a diverse range of crops that can provide food security and variety throughout the year.

Your summer garden can also feature tropical alternatives like Malabar spinach and Armenian cucumbers that laugh at heat that would wilt traditional varieties.

## Zone 9a vs. Zone 9b

Zone 9a is defined by minimum winter temperatures of 20-25°F. Zone 9b, on the other hand, has minimal temperatures that range from 25-30°F.

This small five-degree difference translates, on average, into a 2-week difference in planting times. For example, if you're in Zone 9a, you'll need to wait about two weeks longer than your 9b neighbors before planting warm-season crops like tomatoes and peppers.

Zone 9a last frost typically occurs in mid to late February, compared to early to mid-February for Zone 9b gardeners.



# Challenges in the Zone 9 Garden

Despite its advantages, Zone 9 presents distinct challenges that require adaptation and planning:

- The sandy soil that dominates Zone 9 drains quickly and holds nutrients poorly, meaning you'll need to focus heavily on soil building and frequent fertilization.
- Sandy soil also harbors plant-parasitic nematodes—microscopic roundworms that can devastate vegetable gardens if not properly managed through soil solarization, organic matter additions, and pest-resistant varieties.
- Where soil is not sandy, there may be very heavy clay that compacts easily.

Because of the challenges presented by both sandy and clay soil, Zone 9 gardeners often choose to garden in raised beds or containers exclusively.

Gardeners in Zone 9 face some limitations in their crop choices. Many traditional vegetables simply cannot survive the combination of intense heat and high humidity that characterize summer.

Successful summer gardening means embracing heat-tolerant varieties and understanding that some months are better suited for garden maintenance and soil building rather than intensive production.

## A Note About Planting Times

Within these plans, we will estimate the best time to plant each item. However, weather is unpredictable.

Ultimately, your last frost date in spring and your first frost date in fall should dictate your planting dates.



# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

## Monthly Action Plans

Simply flip to the current month, and see what needs to be done! That said, don't let these lists overwhelm you—and don't let them become your task masters. They are simply guides to help you work with Florida's unique growing seasons and weather patterns.

Each monthly module is designed to stand alone, so you can jump in at any time of year without feeling behind or lost.

## Sample Layouts

We included three garden layouts for those who ask, "Where do I even begin?"

These aren't the only ways to arrange a garden—they're simply a starting line. (Please note they are not to scale.)

Think of them as templates that give you a concrete place to begin rather than staring at a blank space wondering how all the pieces should fit together.

## Reference Charts

We also included three quick-reference charts designed to communicate information fast.

- The **Seed Starting At-a-Glance Chart** gives you a bird's eye view of your year.
- The **Staples Garden Chart** shows you which crops to prioritize if you want to grow a year's worth of vegetables for your family.
- The **Companion Planting Chart** helps you maximize your space and naturally manage pests through strategic plant partnerships.

Enjoy!



# **MONTHLY** *Action Plans*



# JANUARY



**OVERVIEW:** Your harvest month! While northern gardeners plan indoors, you're picking fresh vegetables daily. Perfect time for garden planning and soil building for the year ahead.

**WEATHER WATCH:** Average temps 45-65°F | Peak cool-season growing | Possible frost in 9a



## PRIORITY TASKS

### WEEK 1: Harvest & Assessment

- Daily harvest of cool-season crops
- Assess garden performance from last year
- Order seeds for warm-season crops (*March planting*)
- Check and clean garden tools

### WEEK 2: Planning & Soil Care

- Plan crop rotation for upcoming year
- Take soil samples for testing
- Turn compost piles, add kitchen scraps
- Plan new garden bed locations

### WEEK 3: Continued Planting

- Direct sow lettuce, radishes, carrots
- Transplant cool-season crops (broccoli, cabbage)
- Prepare seed-starting area indoors
- Plan irrigation improvements

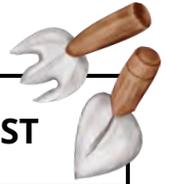
### WEEK 4: Preparation Mode

- Inventory garden supplies and fertilizers
- Research heat-tolerant varieties for summer
- Plan summer shade structures
- Start tomato seeds indoors



# PLANTING GUIDE

## DIRECT SOW NOW (*Cool Weather Crops*)



CROP	SPACING	DAYS TO HARVEST
Lettuce	6-8" apart	45-60 days
Radishes	2" apart	30 days
Carrots	2-3" apart	70-80 days
Beets	3-4" apart	55-65 days
Turnips	4-6" apart	50-60 days
Peas	2-3" apart	60-70 days

## TRANSPLANT NOW

CROP	SPACING	NOTES
Broccoli	18-24" apart	Plant transplants for a March harvest
Cauliflower	18-24" apart	Needs consistent, cool weather
Cabbage	12-18" apart	Plant multiple varieties for an extended harvest
Kale	12-18" apart	A cold-hardy superfood

**In mid-to-late January, start seeds indoors for tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant for March transplanting.**



# PEST ALERTS

## APHIDS

**Damage:** They cluster on new growth, especially brassicas.

**Solution:** Spray with a blast of water, use insecticidal soap, and/or encourage predators like ladybugs and lacewings.



## CUTWORMS

**Damage:** They cut seedlings at soil level.

**Solution:** Wrap the stems of seedlings with aluminum foil or cardboard "collars."



## SLUGS & SNAILS

**Damage:** They leave holes in leaves and slime trails.

**Solution:** Hand pick at night or use an iron phosphate bait like Sluggo. (It's non-toxic.)



# DISEASE PREVENTION

**GOOD AIR CIRCULATION:** Ensure plants have enough space.

**SOIL-LEVEL WATERING:** Avoid wetting the foliage.

**GARDEN SANITATION:** Removed any diseased plant debris immediately.



*Create a low-maintenance garden with this ancient “buddy system.”*

# COMPANION PLANTING PLANS

*Done-for-You Garden Blueprints!*



**Includes 10 themed plans—complete with beneficial pairings, proper spacing, and more!**

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