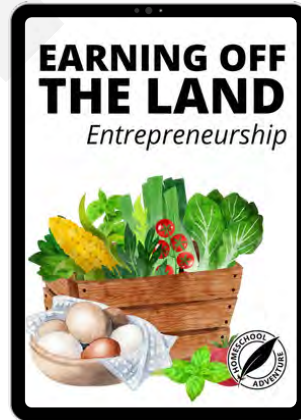


ZONE 5 GARDEN Plans



Homestead Academy of Practical Skills ROADMAP

Stay tuned! We have more resources in our publishing pipeline!



... and more!

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ZONE 5

Garden Plans

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ZONE 5 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 gardeners, we know the satisfaction of growing your own food and the value of putting nutritious, homegrown produce on your family's table.

All of the information in this guide was written with Zone 5's unique conditions in mind: the late spring frosts, the hot summers, and the golden window of fall harvests.



—*Stacy & Jordan*

We also know you're likely juggling work, family meals, and everything else life throws your way. This guide works WITH your busy life—giving you clear monthly priorities, quick-reference charts, and practical planting schedules.

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 5

If you're new to gardening in Zone 5, you're working with a climate that demands careful timing and planning, but rewards you with the ability to grow a wide range of traditional vegetables that thrive in relatively cool conditions.

Zone 5 is defined by its average minimum winter temperatures, which range from -20°F to -10°F. These cold winters mean your growing season is limited to roughly 120-150 days between the last spring frost and first fall frost. This shorter window requires strategic planning to make the most of your productive months.

However, the climate offers real advantages. Cool-season crops like lettuce, spinach, peas, and brassicas (broccoli, cabbage, kale) perform beautifully here, often producing better quality than in warmer zones where heat causes them to bolt or turn bitter. You can grow two crops of many cool-season vegetables—one in spring and another in fall—extending your harvest window significantly.

The cooler nights in summer also benefit crops like tomatoes and peppers, which set fruit more reliably when nighttime temperatures drop below 75°F. Many varieties that struggle with heat stress in warmer zones will produce consistently throughout your summer in Zone 5.

Zone 5a vs. Zone 5b

Zone 5a is defined by minimum winter temperatures of -20°F to -15°F. Zone 5b has minimum temperatures that range from -15°F to -10°F. This five-degree difference translates into approximately 1-2 weeks' disparity in spring planting times.

Zone 5a's last spring frost typically occurs in mid- to late-May, compared to early- to mid-May for Zone 5b gardeners.

If you're in Zone 5a, you'll typically wait until mid- to late-May before safely planting warm-season crops like tomatoes, peppers, and squash outdoors. Zone 5b gardeners can often plant these same crops in early to mid-May.

As for fall, the first frost arrives in late September for Zone 5a and early October for Zone 5b.



Challenges in the Zone 5 Garden

Despite its advantages, Zone 5 presents specific challenges that require adaptation:

- The relatively short growing season means you need to choose varieties carefully. An 85-day tomato will succeed where a 100-day variety may not ripen before frost.
- Late spring frosts can damage or kill tender plants even after your average last frost date. Similarly, early fall frosts can end your season abruptly. Season extension tools like row covers, cold frames, and low tunnels help protect your investment.
- Zone 5 partial clay soil warms slowly in spring and compacts easily when worked wet. Build soil structure with organic matter, practice no-till methods, or use raised beds.

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 season.



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 within Zone 5's 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: The planning and preparation month! This is the time for strategic planning, seed ordering, and indoor projects. Focus on protecting perennials, maintaining tools, and getting ready for the busy spring season ahead.



WEATHER WATCH: Average temperature 15-35°F | Ground typically frozen | Possible thaws in 5b



PRIORITY TASKS

WEEK 1: Planning & Inventory

- Review last year's garden journal and notes
- Order seed catalogs
- Plan crop rotation for spring planting
- Check stored bulbs and tubers for rot

WEEK 2: Indoor Projects

- Clean and sharpen garden tools
- Build or repair cold frames and trellises
- Set up indoor seed-starting station
- Test grow lights and heating mats

WEEK 3: Seed Ordering

- Order seeds for spring planting
- Pre-order live plants and bulbs
- Research new varieties to try
- Inventory seed-starting supplies

WEEK 4: Outdoor Maintenance

- Brush snow/ice off tree branches
- Check tree wraps on young trees
- Plan, review, or update garden map/layout
- Turn compost if not frozen solid



PLANTING GUIDE

INDOOR SEED STARTING (*Late January*)

Note: Most Zone 5 gardeners wait until late February/March to start seeds. These early starters need long growing seasons.

CROP	START DATE	NOTES
Onions (from seed)	January 15-31	Need 10-12 weeks before transplant
Leeks	January 15-31	Very slow growers
Celery	January 15-31	Requires long season (120+ days)
Pansies/Violas	January 15-31	For early spring color

COLD STRATIFICATION

Some perennial seeds need a cold period to germinate.

January is perfect for starting this process.

Perennials needing a cold period include:

- **Native wildflowers**
- **Perennial herbs**
- **Fruit trees and shrubs**

Place seeds in moist sand or peat moss in a sealed bag.

Refrigerate for 4-12 weeks (check seed packet for specific timing).



SEED RECOMMENDATIONS

CONTENDER GREEN BEANS

A reliable bush bean that matures in just 50-55 days and tolerates cooler soil temperatures better than most varieties, making it ideal for Zone 5's short growing season.



GOLDEN ACRE CABBAGE

A compact, early-maturing cabbage (60-65 days) that produces small, dense 3-pound heads perfect for smaller gardens and quick harvests before summer heat arrives.



SCARLET NANTES CARROTS

A classic sweet, coreless carrot with a crisp texture that performs well in heavier soils where other varieties struggle, maturing in about 70 days with excellent storage quality.



PERENNIAL MAINTENANCE

Check mulch coverage on perennial beds to see if frost heaving has exposed crowns. If it has, add more mulch.

Frost heaving occurs when repeated freeze-thaw cycles in the soil literally push plants up and out of the ground. It is especially problematic for shallow-rooted perennials like strawberries and newly planted perennials that haven't established deep roots yet.



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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