

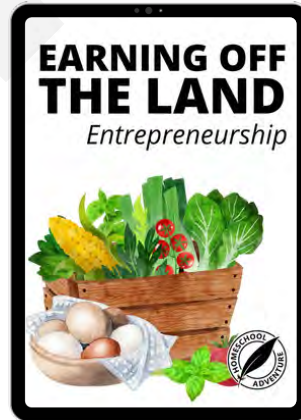
# ZONE 6 GARDEN Plans



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# Homestead Academy of Practical Skills ROADMAP

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*... and more!*

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# **ZONE 6**

## Garden Plans

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# **ZONE 6 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 6'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 6

If you're new to gardening in Zone 6, you're working with a climate that offers a nice balance—long enough summers to grow heat-loving crops, and cool enough springs and falls for excellent cool-season production.

Zone 6 is defined by its average minimum winter temperatures, which range from -10°F to 0°F. These cold winters mean your growing season runs roughly 150-180 days between the last spring frost and first fall frost. This window gives you plenty of time to grow a wide variety of vegetables, from quick-maturing greens to long-season crops like melons and sweet potatoes.

The climate offers real advantages. Cool-season crops like lettuce, spinach, peas, and brassicas (broccoli, cabbage, kale) perform beautifully in Zone 6's spring and fall, 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.

Summer brings enough heat and humidity to successfully grow warm-season favorites like tomatoes, peppers, corn, squash, and beans. The moderately warm nights help crops like tomatoes and peppers set fruit reliably, without the blossom drop that occurs in extremely hot climates.

## Zone 6a vs. Zone 6b

Zone 6a is defined by minimum winter temperatures of -10°F to -5°F. Zone 6b has minimum temperatures that range from -5°F to 0°F. This five-degree difference translates into approximately 1-2 weeks' disparity in spring planting times.

**Zone 6a's last spring frost typically occurs in early- to mid-May, compared to late April to early May for Zone 6b gardeners.**

If you're in Zone 6a, you'll typically wait until mid-May before safely planting warm-season crops like tomatoes, peppers, and squash outdoors. Zone 6b gardeners can often plant these same crops in late April to early May.

**As for fall, the first frost arrives in early to mid-October for Zone 6a and mid- to late-October for Zone 6b.**



# Challenges in the Zone 6 Garden

Despite its advantages, Zone 6 presents specific challenges that require adaptation:

- Unpredictable spring weather is common in Zone 6. Warm spells in March or April can tempt you to plant early, only for a late frost to damage tender seedlings. Don't be fooled by a few warm days—stick to your frost dates and have row covers ready.
- The transition seasons are short. Spring can shift from cold to hot quickly, shortening the window for cool-season crops. Plan for bolt-resistant varieties and succession plant to maximize your spring harvest.
- Soil conditions vary widely across Zone 6. Clay soils warm slowly in spring and compact easily when worked wet. Sandy soils drain quickly and may need more frequent watering. Build soil structure with organic matter, and consider raised beds if drainage is an issue.

## 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 6'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:** January is the quietest month in the Zone 6 garden. The ground is frozen, nothing is growing, so it's prime time to plan, organize, and order seeds. If you like, you can start onion seeds indoors at the end of the month.



**WEATHER WATCH:** Average temperature 20-35°F | Ground mostly frozen | Possible mid-winter thaws | Snow cover varies by region



## 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: Can Start Onion Seeds


- Start onion seeds indoors (or in Feb)
- Sow thinly in flats; keep soil moist and temps at 65-75°F
- Use a heat mat until sprouts appear, then move under lights
- Trim tops to 3-4 inches if seedlings flop over




# PLANTING GUIDE

## INDOOR SEED STARTING (*Late January*)

*Note: Most Zone 6 gardeners wait until late February/March to start seeds. These early starters require an extra long growing season.*



CROP	START DATE	NOTES
Onions (from seed)	January 24-31	Long-day or intermediate-day varieties only. Need 10-14 weeks indoors before transplanting.



## 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

## ONIONS

Zone 6 gardeners need long-day or intermediate-day onion varieties. Good choices include Patterson, Candy, or Redwing. If you'd rather buy onion starts, I highly recommend Dixondale Farms!



## VENTURA CELERY

A vigorous, easy-to-grow variety (80-100 days) that produces tall, flavorful stalks with excellent disease resistance—a reliable choice for home gardeners who find celery challenging.



## 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. Zone 6's fluctuating winter temperatures make this a common issue.*



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

# COMPANION PLANTING PLANS

*Done-for-You Garden Blueprints!*



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