



## Spring Soil Wake-Up Checklist

*For Southern Vegetable Beds*

### Before you start

- Check the 7- to 10-day forecast for heavy rain or storms.
- Gather tools: garden fork, rake, hand fork/hoe, bucket, compost, hose.

### 1. Check Soil Moisture

- Squeeze a handful of soil from your bed.
- Too wet? (oozes water, stays in a lump) → Wait a few days.
- Too dry? (crumbles like dust) → Water deeply, let soak in, then test again.
- Just right: moist, crumbly, holds together briefly, then breaks apart.

### 2. Clear the Bed

- Pull out last year's vegetable plants and roots.
- Remove all weeds, roots and all (especially perennials).
- Pick up sticks, rocks, and leftover plant tags or twine.
- Compost only healthy plant material; bag and trash diseased plants.

### 3. Loosen, Don't Over-Till

- Use a garden fork or broadfork in in-ground beds; a hand fork in raised beds.
- Insert tines 4–8 inches deep and rock gently to crack the soil—don't flip big chunks over.
- Work backward so you don't step on loosened soil.
- Break only the largest clods; avoid grinding soil to dust.

## 4. Add Organic Matter

- Spread 2–3 inches of finished compost or other well-rotted organic matter over the bed.
- Gently mix it into the top 4–6 inches of soil.
- In very sandy or poor soil, consider a slightly thicker layer in the top zone.

## 5. Refresh Raised Beds

- Check soil level in raised beds; note how far it's settled.
- Top up with a mix of compost and topsoil or a quality raised-bed mix.
- Bring soil level to about 1–2 inches below the top of the frame.
- Rake the surface smooth and remove any new rocks or debris.

## 6. Water and Rest

- If no rain is due, water the prepped bed deeply once to settle soil and compost.
- Let the bed rest for about 5–7 days before heavy planting.
- In hot, windy spots, add a light temporary mulch to protect the surface.

## 7. Observe and Plan

- Note spots that stayed wetter or drier than the rest.
- Mark areas where weeds were worst for extra mulch later.
- Jot down ideas for crop placement (thirsty crops in better-drained, richer spots).
- Keep this checklist handy for next spring.

Once every box is checked, your Southern beds are officially “awake” and ready for warm-season vegetables.