



Dry Farming Cheat Sheet



Site Selection

- Not all land is suitable for dry farming
- Look for **green plants thriving in August** → sign of deep soil moisture
- Dig test holes to check for subsoil moisture
- **Deep loamy soil** = ideal



Site Preparation

- Spread **lime yearly** → goal soil pH: **6.4**
- Mow and **shallow till** (3–6") crop into soil
- **Timing:** Look for a dry spell in April—too wet = compaction risk
- Use a **Middle Buster plow** to make deep planting furrows



Seed Selection

- **Most important factor for success.**
- Drought-resistant seeds perform best.
- Non-drought resistant squash = poor results.

Recommended Seed Companies:

Johnny's • High Mowing • Osborne • Adaptive Seeds • Uprising Seeds • TrueLeaf

Transplanting

- Works best for warm-season crops (esp. **tomatoes**).
- Start in **#1 pots by April 1** → greenhouse/low tunnel with frost cloth & plastic.
- **Plant May 5 – June 5** for best results. Later = weaker plants, risk of frost before ripening.
- **Water at transplant** to establish roots (losses >20% without). Although we did not water our tomatoes this year, so this isn't mandatory.
- When planting, dig until you find **moisture** in furrow.
- Direct seeding can work → but timing with soil moisture is critical.

Spacing Guidelines

- **Squash & Melon:** 4' between plants, 7' between rows
- **Tomatoes, Potatoes, Cucumbers, Kale:** 2' between plants, 6' between rows

Nutrition

- Fertility is important, but **needs are lower than irrigated systems**.
- **Wide spacing + weed removal** = less plant competition.
- Fertilizing the entire field is uneconomical (yields are lower in dry farming).
- Lack of water = nutrients stay in soil (not leached).
- Adding **2 tbsp dry mineral mix** at planting improved yield + insect resistance.
- **Foliar feeding** later in season = efficient & economical.

Maintenance

- **Weed every 2 weeks.**
- Tomatoes: **Florida weave every 2 weeks** → keeps fruit off ground, paths clear for harvest.

Cocktail Cover Cropping

- **Categories:** Grass, Legume, Cereal, Brassica, Quinoa/Chenopod.
 - **1 is good, 2 is better, 3 is best.**
 - Best practice: **seed before rain, before Sept 15.**
 - Must be in by **Oct 15** or growth will be poor.
 - Lightly rake soil after seeding for best germination.
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Recommended Dry Farming Varieties

(Bold = tested & proven on our farm)

- **Summer Squash:** ***Dark Star, Goldini, Rheinau, Eight Ball, Homs Kousa***
- **Winter Squash:** ***Delicata (all), Stella Blue Hubbard, Butternut Waltham, Gills Golden Pippin, North Georgia Candy Roaster***
- **Tomato:** ***Tiffen Mennonite, Early Girl, Spring King, Azoychka, Sungold, Cosmonaut Volkov, Sasha, Stupice, Grappoli D’Inverno, Pennolo Giallo & Rosso, Annarita, Black Krim, Black Russian, Early Annie, 4th of July***
- **Melons:** ***King & Queen, Moonbeam, Cal Sweet, Blacktail Mountain, True Love, Melonaid, Lamkin, Canary, Eel River, Crenshaw, Giallo d’Inverno***
- **Kale:** ***Lacinato***
- **Cucumber:** ***Lemon Cucumber, Sour Gherkin***
- **Potato:** ***Belmonda, Purple Viking***
- **Dry Beans:** ***Whipple, Tepary, Rossa di Lucca***
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- **Corn:** ***Dakota Black (popcorn)***

Helpful Podcasts (not dry-farming specific)

- ATTRA
- Growers Daily (no-till)
- Growing for Market
- Regenerative Agriculture
- Nutrition Farming