

## October Gardening Tips

By Nancy Hillin, Somervell County Master Gardener Intern

October is a great month to plant annual flowers such as Dianthus, Snapdragons, and Petunias. If we have a mild winter, your fall planted annuals will produce blooms way ahead of those planted in the spring. It is a gamble but one worth the wager, for you will have blooming plants in the spring before anyone else. Choose from these other cool season annuals for an early show of color in the spring:

Alyssum Calendula Johnny-jump-up Kale/Cabbage Larkspur Stock Sweet pea

Now is the time to plant Buddleia, Butterfly Weed, the shrub form Lantana, Purple Cone Flower, Salvias and Verbena. Butterflies love these attractive, showy perennials. For late fall color, the old standby Chrysanthemum is always a good choice and Nasturtiums will produce vivid colors, too. Other suggestions for fall blooming perennials include Firespike, Mexican Bush Sage, and Mexican Mint Marigold. Wildflowers should be on your list of things to plant in the month of October.

Ornamental grasses should be planted in October. Some of the more popular ones in our area include Purple Fountain Grass, Dallas Blue Switch Grass, Gulf Muhly, Lemon Grass and our state grass, Side Oats Grama.

If you planted a fall vegetable garden in August or September, you should be seeing the results of your efforts. It is not too late to still get in a few crops of the Brassica family in the ground, such as Collards, Kale and Turnips. Most cool season vegetable gardens produce better tasting crops and the usual pests are not as prevalent as in a spring garden. If you planted sweet potatoes, they should be ready to dig. Be prepared to pick the remainder of any warm season crops that are still producing before the first frost or be ready to protect them. Sets of garlic and shallots should be planted this month. Also, onion seeds may be planted now.

Start collecting fallen leaves to put in composting bins and to mulch between rows in your vegetable garden. Also, use mulch in your flower beds and around woody ornamentals. Mulching greatly reduces moisture evaporation and keeps weed growth down.

Be sure to harvest any warm season herbs such as basil. And remember that an October planting of some of the herb family is very do-able. Include Cilantro, Dill, Fennel, Parsley, Arugula, Boarage and Winter Savory in your fall garden.

October 1-15 signals time to fertilize your lawn. Another way to know the right time to fertilize is when night time temperatures reach 50 degrees or less and your lawn has not needed to be mowed in two weeks. This fall application is just as crucial as the one in spring.

This is the month to “prepare” shrubs and trees if you need to move them. Late winter is the best time to plant or move shrubs or trees. But for now, cut a 16-20 inch diameter circle with a sharpshooter shovel in the soil around the shrub or tree. Let the depth be 12 inches. This promotes new roots during the fall and winter, giving a better chance of successfully moving a shrub or tree. If you plan on adding new woody ornamentals to your landscape, this is the time to do it.

Roses are putting on a great show this month. Remember to deadhead your Roses and they will continue the show until the first heavy freeze.

Last but never least, continue to fill your feeders, puddlers and birdbaths for our friends on the wing.

Source: Doug Welsh's Texas Garden Almanac  
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