

Parker County Master Gardener Association Garden Tips - September

Prepare the beds for spring-flowering bulbs as soon as possible. It is important to cultivate the soil and add generous amounts of organic matter to improve water drainage. Bulbs will rot without proper drainage.

Sow seeds of pansies, pinks, snapdragons and other winter flowers in flats for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.

Plan to plant wildflowers in early September and October. Check supplies now and order seed for planting in open sunny areas. Consider black-eyed Susan, bluebonnet, coneflower, evening primrose, fire-wheel, Indian paintbrush and many others. Soils should be lightly cultivated prior to planting.

Dig and divide grape hyacinths, jonquils, oxalis and other spring-flowering bulbs early in the month. Do not hold them out of the soil but plant them immediately.

Divide spring-flowering perennials such as ajuga, amaryllis, cannas, daylilies, gaillardia, iris, liriopse, rudbeckias, Shasta daisy and violets.

Plant garden mums, in bud and bloom where they can become established.

Plant leafy vegetables and root crops early in the month.

Trees, shrubs, vines and groundcovers planted in early fall will be well established for next growing season.

If you are planning on planting warm-season turf, do so by middle of the month.

Rejuvenate heat-stressed begonias and geraniums for the fall season by lightly pruning, fertilizing and watering.

Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning until mid-winter. Pruning now may stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.

Remove weak, unproductive growth and old seed heads from crape myrtles and roses to stimulate new growth for fall beauty.

Keep perennial beds neat by removing dead leaves, stems and old flower stalks. Insects and diseases overwinter in the stubble.

Save major pruning of shrubs, trees and groundcovers for late winter. If you need to do some reshaping, do it following fall season's growth.

Continue mowing your lawn at the recommended height until frost. This will keep the lawn dense, vigorous and cut down on weeds.

Caladiums and coleus require plenty of water this time of year if they are to remain lush and attractive until fall. Fertilize with ammonium sulfate at the rate of 1/3 to 1/2 pound per 100 square feet of bed area and water thoroughly.

Do not allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture. Hollies will frequently drop their fruit under drought conditions. Some vegetables such as cucumbers or eggplants also become bitter if under watered during peak growing times.

Continue a disease spray schedule on roses as blackspot and mildew can be extremely damaging in September and October.

Last chance this year to fertilize your warm-season turf grasses (St. Augustine grass and Bermuda grass). Feed early in the month with 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 (make the application at least by mid-month).

If you see iron chlorosis (yellowed leaves with dark green veins on the newest growth), treat with iron/sulfur. This will probably be your last chance to correct it for this year.

Fertilize azaleas, camellias, and gardenias with specialty food to encourage good bud set during fall and early winter.

Do not neglect your container plants and hanging baskets. They need a complete-and-balanced analysis fertilizer to remain lush.

With cooler weather and more rainfall, fire ants may again appear. Apply baits and individual mound treatment for best control.

If your turf begins to die and comes loose easily from the soil surface, check to see if you have white grub damage. If you find 4 or more grubs per square foot of soil, apply appropriate insecticide, then water deeply. Make sure you have enough damage to warrant treating; some lawns never need to be treated.

Brown patch can leave rounded brown areas in your St. Augustine grass. Blades pull loose easily from runners. Decayed area will be visible at bases of individual leaves. Apply appropriate fungicide, and do not water your lawn in the evening or at night.

If you have dallisgrass and other weed grasses in Bermuda grass, this is the last chance this year to apply MSMA or DSMA. If you have trouble with St. Augustine grass spreading into Bermuda grass, the same herbicides will stop it.

It is time for the second and final application of Image to control nutsedge (nutgrass) for this year (should be made by the middle of the month).

Around the middle of this month, apply pre-emergent herbicides to prevent germination of annual grassy and broadleafed winter weeds.

To control loopers on broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower, use *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt).