

Late Summer Gardening Tips

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Often the best looking plants and landscapes are not accidental. To get great results careful husbandry and planning are necessary components along with putting the right plant in the right spot. Following is a list of things to consider performing, or at least thinking about now.

Houseplants – If you let your houseplants live outside, preparing them for a winter inside starts with preventing them from carrying insects inside with them. A week or so before moving them inside, a dose of systemic insecticide starts the insect protection. Once inside, at least one and maybe more, applications of contact killer insecticide should also be done.

Trees & Shrubs – Unless necessary due to injury or accident, pruning should be delayed until early fall at the soonest. Once the heat of summer has passed, the prime time to plant trees, shrubs, and perennials is upon us so planning for those days now will pay off in a couple of weeks. Because we are getting close to the end of the growing season, applications of any fertilizers high in nitrogen (the first of the three numbers on all fertilizers) should be avoided on trees and shrubs. Nitrogen promotes new growth, new growth is high in moisture content, and tissue high in moisture is the first damaged by cold weather.

Annual Flowers – Now is a great time to evaluate how your annual flower beds, pots, and hanging baskets performed. Pictures are good, notes are good, but pictures and notes are better still. Check for those who just didn't make it, combinations of plants that were planted together but grew at different speeds, and ones that, simply put, did exactly what you wanted them to do.

Veggies & Fruits – Harvest time is one of the most rewarding times any gardener experiences. Late summer is also a time to reflect on what went good, what didn't, and what to experiment with next year. It's also extremely important to make sure adequate notes, maps, or pictures have been taken of what vegetables were planted where. Crop rotation is an important step in reducing and sometimes preventing diseases. An easy to use 4-crop plan tells us that where fruits like tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, peppers, etc. were planted, put beans and legumes the next year. Where the beans and legumes were, put leafy plants like lettuce, spinach, arugula, and kale. Where the leafy plants were, put root crops like carrots, beets, potatoes, and onions. Where the root crops were, that where the fruits go.

Lawns ❖Cool season grasses, which most lawns are, should keep getting regular irrigation through mid-September. Their last nitrogen fertilizer application should be no later than Labor Day. Switch to root building fertilizers, fertilizers with the second number the highest, for your final lawn fertilization. Post heat of the summer is a very good time for dethatching and aerating, as is overseeding thin areas or re-seeding areas with little to no grass.

Then there's weeding. It seems like we've had more weeds than usual the past couple of years. A great time to apply non-selective or broad leaf control herbicides is just as the weeds start to shut down for the winter. At that time the plants are transporting above ground nutrients underground for storage in their roots. If you choose to use herbicides, careful and efficient use of them takes proper timing and there is not a better time to kill the weeds than when the weeds start shut-down mode.

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