

September Gardening Tasks

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Sunrises are coming later and sunsets sooner signaling the slowdown of our growing season. This has been a remarkably cool and wet summer making some things later (tomato ripening) while other plants are looking much better than expected (astilbe, phlox, etc.). While we travel towards the inevitable, September is the perfect time to get some garden and landscape tasks accomplished, or if not completed at least planned.



This is the perfect time to plant trees and shrubs. There's still enough time before a hard freeze that roots can become established.

Make sure the trees and shrubs get enough water but as the first few light freezes appear in forecasts start backing off with the watering so the plants can harden off before winter starts. Do not fertilize newly planted trees and shrubs until next year.

If you have cool season grasses (bluegrass, fescue, ryegrass) making up your lawn, stop nitrogen-heavy lawn fertilizing but don't put away the spreader just yet. Come mid- to late-October, about the time the mower is put away for the year, apply winterizer lawn fertilizer to stimulate extra growth to the grass' roots. If you do this next month you will definitely see the results come spring. Winterizer lawn fertilizer will have a larger last number of the N-P-K ratio than what you would find on spring and summer fertilizer bags.

If you have house plants or containered perennials that will not survive our winters, this month is a good time to start bringing them back inside. Be aware these plants might be hosting insect pests that you don't want in your home so be prepared to apply insecticides to them. You should use both a contact insecticide that kills adults and some immature insects and a systemic insecticide that kills eggs and larvae that are in the soil to prevent infestations. As always when using chemicals follow label instructions.

Another good September chore is starting fall clean-up in flower beds by cutting back anything that has finished blooming or is diseased. If it is diseased it's best to either burn or bag and trash the leaves and stems instead of composting them where the disease may have a good chance of flourishing and becoming a problem again next year.

A fun job is getting areas ready for fall bulb planting. It's too early still to actually put bulbs in the ground, but planning on where you want some nice spring color and getting those areas ready should be done in the next few weeks. If your soil needs help this is a great time to add any amendments to it. I'll write more about bulb planting in a few weeks as well.

If you have fruit trees that are starting to produce keep picking up any fruit that falls to the ground. This becomes more of an issue as the fruits get bigger and especially after high wind events. Not only can the rotting fruit attract pests but cleaning up the mess they create isn't very fun. Just like in the garden, the cleaner you keep an area the fewer pest and disease problems you'll have.

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