



“From the Potting Shed”

Riverview Garden Club- Helpful Hints

September 2024

September gardening is a time of transition as annual plants start to fade, summer veggies give their last push and temperatures begin to dip. Here are some tips to keep your garden growing strong into fall!

Ten Things to do in the garden this month...

- 1. Dig in!** Add perennials and spring-blooming (fall-planted) bulbs to your garden. Perennials planted in the fall can establish healthy roots, resulting in bigger growth and earlier blooms in the first season. Bulbs like Tulips, Daffodils, Allium, and more need the overwintering period in order to bloom in the spring.
- 2. Make notes in your garden journal.** Take note of what grew well, and areas where you'd like to make changes. This will be a big help when you are planning your garden over the winter months.
- 3. Weeding.** Be sure to keep up with weeding. Diligent weeding helps prevent weeds from going to seed in your garden, and helps prevent disease in next season's garden.
- 4. Stop pruning and fertilizing.** At this point in the season, pruning and fertilizing only promotes new green growth that most likely will not survive through the winter.

5. Encourage annuals to self-seed. Stop deadheading in September and let the flowers go to seed. Annual Poppies, Zinnias, Sunflowers, and more will drop their seeds and, in the right conditions, can come back next year. The seeds also provide a treat to feed birds.

6. Leave seed heads standing. Perennials include Echinacea, Sedum, Ornamental Grasses, and Clematis standing to provide habitat for pollinators and food for birds over the winter months. These also provide texture and visual interest to the winter garden.

7. Clean up plants as they fade. Cut back any perennial that is diseased and dispose of the trimmings in the trash, rather than your compost pile, to prevent the spread of the disease. Cut back yellowed foliage on perennials such as Daylilies, Iris, Peonies, Bee Balm, and more.

8. Divide and conquer perennials that spread. Dig up and divide Daylilies, Iris, Hostas, and more in September if they have become overcrowded or outgrown the space.

9. Mulch. Adding a layer of mulch in your garden beds to provide a nice layer of protection to prevent soil erosion, add some organic matter to the soil, retains moisture during periods of drier weather and insulates bulbs and perennial root systems for the upcoming cold weather and protect plants from snow and ice over the winter months.

10. Plant cover crops. Build your garden soil for next year by adding quick-growing cover crops. Plant Clover, Vetch, and Austrian Winter Pea as “green manures” to help build nutrients and get the soil ready for next spring’s planting.

Fall Garden Prep and Maintenance

- Keep up with weeding during September. You may be tempted to let the weeds be and wait for future frosts to kill them off. Avoid this method because you don't want those weeds to go to seed and be even more of a problem next year. Remember -one year's seeds are seven years weeds!
- Continue watering as needed. Watering is vital to help new perennials and trees establish their root systems and for those already set plant root systems to stay adequately hydrated. Conversely, annual plantings are slowing down a bit in their growth, and cooler temperatures may mean they don't need as much water as they did during the peak of summer.
- Stop pruning trees and shrubs. Cooler weather and frosts can cause new growth to be susceptible to damage.
- Allow perennial plants to die back before cutting them back. Leave some seed heads on plants for birds to feed on and for seed collection.
- Plant new hardy perennial plants in the cooler days of September. This gives plenty of time for roots to get established before winter sets in.
- Dig up tubers of gladiolus, dahlias, cannas, and caladiums and store them in a dry peat moss over the winter.
- Collect seeds from high-performing plants and store them in seed collection envelopes. Don't forget to label them.
- If you've been growing any tropical plants, start transitioning them indoors. They need to adjust to the change in lighting conditions gradually to prevent leaf drop.
- Bring in any houseplants that you've had outside this summer. Spray them off with water to remove any pests and watch for insects once the plants are indoors.

When and What to Fertilize

- Stop fertilizing trees and shrubs during September if you haven't done so already. Cooler weather is approaching, and any new growth put out from fertilizing can be susceptible to damage.
- Fertilize vegetable gardens as needed. This includes gardens that with summer vegetable plants that are still producing and gardens that have finished producing. Organic fertilizers help to build the soil and take time to break down to be available to plants for the next growing season.
- If you have a cool-season variety turf grass, it's time to fertilize your lawn. If you are unsure what kind of grass that you have, bring a small clump to your local extension office and ask for some guidance.

Fall Vegetable Gardening

- Sow lettuces, radishes, spinach, carrots, and kale. Plant in cold frames or have row covers at the ready for those in Zone 6.
- Plant garlic and shallots.

Source: American Meadows, September Garden Checklist

Happy Fall Gardening!