

Tips for the Landscape and Garden

Tips adapted from Bob Westerfield, State Consumer Horticulturist for the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, and Walter Reeves, Retired Extension agent for DeKalb County and Saturday Morning Gardening Show Host on WSB Radio.



Clean up around roses, flowerbeds, and summer vegetable gardens; remove diseased or insect infested foliage. Fruit and stems left on the ground can harbor pests that may over winter and reoccur next year. Remove any infected debris from around the plant's base and dispose of it in the trash.

Fall is a great time to plant, divide, and move perennials and shrubs for next year's garden. Be sure to enrich the soil with compost and/or soil conditioner before replanting to encourage good root growth and strong blooms next spring. By planting in the fall, your plants do not endure the stressful summer heat during establishment and have time to form sufficient root systems before the onset of winter dormancy. Keep newly installed plants watered thoroughly as October can be hot and dry. Wait until spring to apply any fertilizer other than a root stimulant.

This is a great time to get your soil test done – some amendments need time to break down in the soil, such as lime. Contact the Extension Office for directions and a soil collection bag. You will receive specific recommendations for what you need to improve your garden soil for optimal plant growth next season.

Start a second planting of cool season crops such as collards, turnips, cabbage, mustard, and kale.

A final weeding-mulching of fruit and ornamental plants will help prevent weeds next year. Never leave rotting fruit on the ground under trees or bushes as these harbor pests and disease.

Red maple trees offer brilliant fall color and they may be safely planted now; recommended varieties include 'Red Sunset', 'October Glory' and 'Autumn Flame'.

Collect okra seedpods, gourds, rosehips, and other plants from your garden suitable for dried flower arrangements. Air-dry these plant materials in a dark, dry room.

It is also a good time to plant cover crops in empty vegetable beds to increase nitrogen and biomass in the soil. Consider red clover, buckwheat, and hairy vetch, among others.

Fall is the best time of year for moving plants.

Transplant your deciduous trees and shrubs when they are dormant. Evergreen trees or shrubs, however, may be transplanted earlier in the fall before they go into dormancy. The soil for trees should not be improved with amendments, just loosened with a garden fork so roots have a better chance of expanding into the surrounding soil. Do place mulch out to the drip line but keep mulch below the root flare and away from the trunk.

Pick bagworms from evergreen shrubs and destroy in a bucket of soapy water. This will eliminate the spring hatch from the over wintered eggs.

Cut back perennial herbs to encourage well-branched growth next year. You can also harvest your herbs, dry and place in freezer storage bags, then place in the freezer for later use.

Annual herbs can also be harvested and frozen for winter use. Basil will turn black if frozen so use an old ice cube tray and freeze the basil in water or even

better, olive oil. Once frozen, pop into a zip bag and keep in freezer ready for winter dishes.

Before temperatures start dropping, be sure to check for any chemicals that should not freeze. Move them to a safe storage place where temperatures do not fall below 40F. Frozen liquids can break jars and split plastic containers, spreading concentrated chemicals within reach of children or pets.

If you want your poinsettia to turn color by Christmas, now's the time to begin giving it 14 hours of complete darkness [use a box or windowless closet] and 10 hours of bright light each day. It will take 6-10 weeks for the bracts to turn red.

Apply a weed preventer to Bermuda, Zoysia and Centipede lawns to thwart winter weeds like chickweed and poa annua (Annual Bluegrass).

The pansy planting season is in full swing. Do not forget to add those other cold loving annuals such as calendula, snapdragons, kale, English daisies, and dusty miller. Use a root stimulator fertilizer to get them started and a slow-release fertilizer to keep them going.

Apply a weed preventer (Preen, etc.) to beds of already-planted cool-season flowers to prevent weed seeds from sprouting this winter.

Raise your mower height ½-inch and enjoy a last mowing of your warm season grasses such as Bermuda, Centipede or Zoysia. You can now put your lawn mower to rest for the winter. Be sure to run the gas tank dry and get the blade sharpened to get a jump on spring chores.

Take root cuttings of geranium, begonia, coleus, and other “tender outside” plants to bring indoors for the winter. Many will root in a jar of water and can then be transplanted into pots. Be sure they get good light during the winter but avoid feeding until early spring.

Grinding fall leaves with your bagging lawn mower will speed decomposition. Use in your regular composter to increase the amount of brown material or place directly under bushes as mulch.

Towards the end of the month when the soil is cooler, it is a good time to plant spring flowering bulbs. Choose firm bulbs and dig holes to recommended depths.

If you forgot to put out fall pre-emergent for lawn weeds it is not too late. Read and follow label directions carefully. Only apply the recommended amounts. Avoid allowing product to wash into streams or sewer drains.

Remember you can plant most perennial wildflower seed in the fall. Exposure to cold weather and winter precipitation enhances germination of many perennial species. Save the annuals for early spring.

Fall is the time to collect seeds from native plants. Clip dead flowers and allow them to fully dry inside a paper bag — the seeds will be easier to shake free from the flower when it is completely dry. Some heavier seed heads, like coneflowers, may need to be scrubbed against a screen to loosen seeds. If you can, leave some seed heads standing in your garden over the winter for birds and other wildlife.

If you are trying to reduce your carbon footprint, consider reducing the size of your lawn area and increasing plantings for pollinators and birds. Choose plants that produce seeds, nectar, and fruits that wildlife can eat during the winter. Check out the following sites for native plants and wildlife friendly planting ideas:

- [Georgia Native Plant Society](#)
- [Native Plants for Georgia](#)
- [Xerces Society](#) (pollinator support)
- [Beyond Butterflies: Gardening for Native Pollinators](#)
- [Atlanta Audubon Society](#)
- [Cornell Lab All About Birds](#)
- [National Wildlife Federation](#) (attracting amphibians to your garden)

This is a great time to reconsider your yard and plant for wildlife be it pollinators, native amphibians, or birds.

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