

# 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.



It is time to over-seed or establish a new fescue lawn. Check with the Extension office for complete directions, helpful hints, and fertilization schedules.

New lawns will thrive with good soil preparation. Till 6-8" and add good quality compost. Rake smooth and spread seed following package directions. Do not spread more seed than recommended as this will lead to diseases, over competition, and weak grass.

The middle of the month is the time to apply pre-emergent herbicides to your lawn for winter annual or perennial weeds that germinate or form rosettes in turf during the fall. Do not apply pre-pre-emergent if over-seeding or planting a new lawn.

To minimize the occurrence of black spot-on roses, prune and remove infected branches. Be sure to destroy the clippings, as the disease will carry over from year to year if left in the garden. Dip clippers in alcohol before moving on to the next plant to reduce spreading diseases.

Allow plants to finish the summer growth cycle in a normal manner. Never encourage growth with heavy applications of fertilizer or excessive pruning at this time as plants will quickly delay their hardening process that has already begun in anticipation of winter several

months ahead. New growth can be easily injured by an early freeze.

As you select your flowering bulbs to plant this fall, keep in mind that larger bulbs give big, showy displays, but cost more. Smaller bulbs usually are less expensive, with a smaller show but are great for brightening nooks and crannies in your yard. Look for bulbs that naturalize over time such as daffodils and grape hyacinths. If you are not sure which end of a bulb is up, plant it on its side. The stem will always grow upright.

As the nights become cool toward the end of the month, caladiums will begin to lose leaves. It is time to dig up the tubers, shake off the dirt, and allow them to dry. Pack loosely in shredded paper then store in a warm dry place. Replant this space with your favorite fall / winter plants such as snap dragon, pansy, wall flower, or chrysanthemum transplants.

Harvest winter squash and pumpkins when fully mature, but before they are damaged by a freeze. Cut the fruits from the vine with a short piece of stem attached. Remove any soil on the skin. They will keep for several months if stored in a cool, dry area.

Be sure not to store apples or pears with vegetables such as potatoes and squash. The fruits give off ethylene gas that speeds up the ripening process of vegetables and may cause them to develop "off" flavors.

Cleaning up around fruit trees is crucial because weeds and debris act as hosts to over-wintering insects. Rake up debris and mulch well, keeping mulch below the tree's root flare. Check around the base of fruit trees and look for gummy or jelly-like sap mixed with grass at the base of the trunk. Probe the hole with a wire to puncture the borer living in the tunnel. Scrap away the mess and rinse the trunk with water to discourage fungal growth on the trunk.

Extend your vegetable crops well into winter. You can plant seed or plants for lettuce, cress, radish, endive, carrot, and spinach. These plants like the cooler temperatures as they mature but will start growth faster while it is still warm.

Dig new garden beds for next spring. Incorporate plenty of organic matter, such as leaves and compost, and leave the soil rough to allow good water penetration when it rains. Plant a cover crop such as winter wheat, crimson clover, and/or buckwheat, these are also called a green manure, and will increase the soil's organic matter content. Mow and turn into the soil when it reaches a mature height.

Many balled and burlap trees and shrubs are now sold wrapped in synthetic burlap which will NOT rot in the ground, resulting in a root bound plant that does not grow if not removed. Some of this material strongly resembles cotton burlap. Cut it away from the root ball once the plant is in place. Loosen any roots that circle the root ball and prune these to encourage growth out into the surrounding soil. Loosen soil 2-3 feet out from the root ball but no amendments are needed. Add mulch to keep the soil moist and weed free. Remember to keep mulch away from the stem or trunk. No mulch volcanoes please.

Plant peonies now, but make sure the crowns are buried only 1 ½ to 2 inches below ground level. Deeper planting keeps the plants from blooming. Keep mulch away from the crown to prevent rot during the winter. Remember peonies like full sun.

Plant new cool season lawn grasses [fescue] now. Prep soil by tilling to 6-8 inches, add compost, and rake smooth. Read the seed application directions carefully and do not plant more seed than called for as this will lead to diseases, excessive competition, and weak grass. Keep seeds evenly moist, but not wet, until they sprout. Slowly cut back watering as lawn becomes established. One inch a week when it does not rain should be sufficient until grass is firmly rooted and healthy. Do not mow until grass is 2-3 inches tall. Never cut off more than 1/3 of the grass blade.

This is also the time to over-seed established cool season lawns such as fescue. Follow seed bag directions carefully for amounts of seed to use.

Spinach is much better as a fall crop than as a spring crop, as it goes to seed quickly when the weather

warms up in spring. Begin planting succession crops now to enjoy most of the winter.

Near the end of the growing season pick off all tomato and pepper blossoms that will not have time to bear fruit and prune back vines, so plant nutrients go into existing tomatoes.

Houseplants that have been outside all summer should be allowed to make a slow transition to indoor conditions. Quick changes in environments can result in yellowed foliage and leaf drop. To avoid injury, bring plants indoors before temperatures dip below 55 degrees F. Check for insect pests before you move the plant. Sinking the pot in water for a few minutes will often float pests out of the root ball and serves to thoroughly moisten the soil before the plants transition to dry indoor conditions. Large plants can be flushed by watering until water floats above the root ball in the pot.

The best activator for compost is old compost. Remember to keep compost moist and turn frequently to allow air to speed decomposition.

As plants go to seed, leave the seed heads for birds to eat as they migrate through. Create areas where leaf litter can be left on the ground as winter habitat for butterfly larva to pupate and overwinter.

If you have kept last year's poinsettia, now is the time to begin forcing it to color up for the coming holiday season. Move plant inside following directions for houseplants. Keep in a bright window during the day but be sure it gets 14 hours of complete darkness every night. Use a box or closet for complete darkness. Do this for 6-10 weeks until proper color is achieved.

Add fall blooming perennials to the landscape such as asters, sedums, chrysanthemums, Japanese anemones, and goldenrods. These feed pollinators into the fall and keep the landscape blooming.

For your late ripening tomatoes, place a ripe apple in a closed container with your green tomatoes to encourage the tomatoes to turn red. Ripe apples give off ethylene gas that causes tomatoes to ripen.

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