



Monkshood

This Month in the Garden

by Peggy Koppmann

Thirty days hath September ... and it's time to savor every one of them. Later this month the calendar will officially turn to autumn, but for now we can enjoy the cooling days, rebounding annuals, blooming fall perennials, and the garden harvest. Let your garden be a respite from the chaos that surrounds us these days. The garden offers "a sense of contentment and tranquility" as part of "a small-scale exercise in altruism and benevolence". Peace, often lacking in our daily lives, can be regained in the garden.

(quotes from Jason Kay in The Guardian)

Thatch Facts – That layer of dead plant tissue known as thatch is made up of leaves, stems and roots and lies on top of the soil. If it is not thicker than 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch, it has some benefits to your lawn, including slowing water loss, cushioning soil and decreasing compaction, and insulating grass crowns from soil temperature swings. If the layer gets too thick it can prevent water, fertilizer, insect/disease controls from reaching the soil, block sunlight from lower grass blades, and block soil so that roots grow into the thatch, creating a shallow-rooted lawn. Over fertilizing, overwatering, and mowing too high are some of the causes, but leaving grass clippings on the lawn is NOT a cause. If you plan to dethatch your lawn this month, review the tips from the Cornell Turfgrass Team at turf.cals.cornell.edu/lawn/lawn-care-the-easiest-steps-to-an-attractive-environmental-asset/. Click on 'Thatch' under Advanced Care section.

Planting Pointers – The cooler temps and fall rainfall patterns make it a good time to plant trees and shrubs. The warmth in the soil may last up to eight more weeks and allow good root development before cold weather shuts down growth. Watering is critical; provide about 1 inch of water per week and keep watering until the ground is frozen. (Save red maple, birch, hawthorn, poplar, cherry, plum and some oaks for spring planting.) Find room for Exochorda 'The Bride', (Pearlbush), if you're looking for a beautiful spring bloomer, (but pretty ordinary as a shrub later) or *Tilia Americana* (American Basswood, American Linden) for a beautiful tree with wonderful fragrance during its bloom period.



A Fresh Start – Plant a new start of cool-season crops including lettuce, spinach and other greens. You'll have enough time for a short season crop like radishes and for onions and garlic that overwinter. Look into

hardy spring onions like 'White Lisbon' and 'Performer'. Also, check out the Hudson Valley Seed Library website for information on planting in fabric bags that can be brought closer to the house for warmth to extend the growing season. They look like a great way to bring herbs inside also.

Adding Fall Color – The cool, clear days of fall bring great color from trees and shrubs but you can add color from a variety of perennials as well. Consider adding *Amsonia* for yellow/gold; 'Dragon's Blood' sedum for red leaf color; *Cimicifuga* 'Hillside Black Beauty'; sedum 'Neon'; *Hibiscus* 'Cranberry Crush'; Monkshood for deep blue/purple; Switch grass 'Cheyenne Sky' for wine-red late season color; Aster 'Little Carlow' for soft blue; and the spectacular ruby to purple-red of Aster 'Lou Williams'. They are just a few of the perennials that will provide a kick of color in the beautiful sunlight of late summer.

And then – Begin to feed the birds; fertilize roses for the last time early in the month; pull out annuals that are spent and won't come back; plant autumn onion sets; stop fertilizing shrubs and trees; divide peonies but don't plant them too deep; dispose of diseased plant material – don't compost it; keep feeding hanging baskets and containers; collect seeds and LABEL them; take root cuttings from begonias, coleus, and geraniums; take cuttings for dried arrangements; buy NYS apples and make a pie. September tastes good!



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