

THIS MONTH IN THE GARDEN by Peggy Koppmann

Mark your calendar for September 24 and welcome the Harvest Moon. With luck, and clear skies, you'll be able to see bright moonlight early in the evening soon after sunset. The Harvest Moon traditionally gave farmers extra time for harvesting, so if you have some harvesting to do in the garden, this is your chance. But take some bug spray with you.



Perennial Planting – September is still a good time to plant new perennials, especially towards the end of the month. The soil is still warm, moisture levels increase and the sun is less intense. Root systems can develop in warm soil as opposed to waiting for the soil to warm up in the spring. There is generally less weed competition now, (if you've kept up with weeding), and gardeners have a little more time in the fall than in the busy spring.

Keep It Up – Deadheading never stops.

Continue to deadhead dahlias, delphiniums, roses, penstemon, and others to ensure color well into September. And while you're at it, leave those annuals alone. They love the cooler nights and increased moisture of September and will also give color well into next month. Keep them watered and deadheaded and resist displays of mums and pumpkins until fall actually arrives.



A New Start – September also brings the right conditions for starting or renovating a

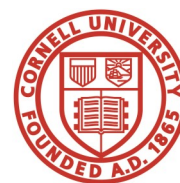
lawn area. If you must have grass, do it right. Check out Lori Brewer's excellent publication: Lawn Care, The Easiest Steps to an Environmentally Attractive Asset (hort.cornell.edu/turf/lawn-care). The same website will lead you to a number of other excellent references including the video blogs, seminars, and YouTube videos from "The Turf Guy", Frank Rossi, of Cornell. A lawn is a big investment of time, money, and effort so do your homework before you start this project.

Population Growth – This is the season for taking cuttings to increase your plant inventory. Many of the plants we think of as annuals are really tender perennials. You can take soft-wood cuttings or leaf cuttings from annuals and tender perennials such as coleus, Begonias, Alternanthera, Iresine, Scaevola, Penstemon, Lantana and many others. Semi-hardwood cuttings may be taken from deciduous and evergreen plants in the fall including Abelia, Jasmine, Ceanothus, Deutzia, Spirea and Weigela. There are a multitude of sources on propagation to fill in more details on the process including plantpropagation.com and ncsu.edu/plant-propagation-by-stem-cuttings. What could be better than free plants?

In the Garden – Garden clean-up jobs are everywhere in September. Bean and pea plants can be pulled along with other vines and plants that have finished producing. Chop them up and layer with "brown" material such as dried leaves to start the composting process. Some sources suggest sprinkling in a handful of nitrogen fertilizer every few layers. Cover crops such as annual rye can be sown as a cover crop and will generally die over the winter.

Winter wheat and late-planted rye will grow until the ground freezes and can be tilled in early spring. Winter squashes must develop a rind hard enough that it can not be dented with a fingernail before harvesting. Watch for the stem to turn hard and begin to shrivel. Cut them with a two-inch stem, let them cure and enjoy them later at your Thanksgiving table.

And then – Feed annuals for the last time. Stake asters, mums and other tall plants. Bring your houseplants indoors. Buy garlic for October planting. Pick apples. Cut flowers for drying. Keep harvesting and share with friends. Start cleaning pots for storage. Clean up fallen fruit. Finish ordering and/or buying bulbs for next year. Plant a new tree. Prune late-summer flowering shrubs. Plant winter pansies. Make a garden map before plants die off for the season. Keep weeding. Start seed collecting. Plant new evergreens. Pinch out the tops of Brussels sprouts. Attend a fall gardening class and enjoy the end of another successful garden season!



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