**September Gardening Calendar**

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Did you have problems with weeds in your lawn last winter? If so, now would be the time to apply pre-emergent herbicide to your lawn to prevent weeds such as dandelion, bedstraw, thistles, rescue grass, annual bluegrass and henbit.

Good overall pre-emergent products are Amaze or XL. Check the labels for mention of your problem weeds. Portrait is a good choice for the broadleaf weeds.

Remember that most pre-emergents form a barrier across the surface of the soil that prevents seeds from germinating. Any disruption of the barrier such as aeration or adding top dressing will reduce effectiveness of the pre-emergent herbicide. Aeration and top-dressing in February will be fine; the pre-emergent will have finished its work by then.

September is a good month to spread wildflower seed. Obtain the seed of your favorite wildflower or a Texas mix from your favorite nursery or an internet supplier like Wildseed farms (<http://www.wildseedfarms.com/>).

The seed needs to be spread in full sun where it can touch soil. It doesn’t work well to apply seed to sod or heavily weeded surfaces. You can remove weeds but a heavy growth of plants indicates that the wildflowers will have considerable competition this winter and next spring. Wildflowers do well in poor or thin soils that dry out to the point each summer that there isn’t any weed cover.

Among the seeds to consider are verbena, evening primrose, bluebonnet, Mexican hat, coreopsis, phlox, bee balm, poppies, wine cups and Salvia coccinea.

Wildflower sites do not need to be prepared and the seed should not be covered with soil. If you must do more than apply seed over an appropriate site, rake the soil prior to seeding. Irrigation is not required either, but a watering once or twice this fall in absence of rain will increase the germination rate.

Some of the wildflower varieties germinate in the fall and develop roots all winter in preparation for spring blooms.

September is an important month for fall vegetable gardening. It is cool enough to have seed germination and there is enough mild weather left to produce a crop before the first freeze.

Early in the month, plant sweet corn, summer squash and green beans with seed. Tomato transplants must also be in place if you expect a crop.

Throughout the month, carrots, radish, beets, rutabaga, collards, lettuce, chard, mustard and turnips can be planted with seed.

Late in the month if the weather has cooled enough, some gardeners plant their broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts and greens transplants.

The best tomato varieties for reliable production seem to be Surefire, Solar Fire, Tycoon, BHN 602, 444, Celebrity, BHN 956 (Rodeo Cherry) and Phoenix. Surefire produces tennis ball-sized fruit and is the quickest variety to produce mature tomatoes. It will only be available in limited quantities because the seed is no longer produced for commercial crops. Latch on to a few plants if you see them at your favorite nursery.

September is also a wonderful month to observe hummingbirds in Central Texas. We usually have three varieties—black chin, ruby throat, and rufous—that move through the area. Hang one or more hummingbird feeders filled with sugar water (4 parts water, 1 part sugar) on the eaves or a trellis and the birds will visit your patio or balcony.

If you have room for plants, a few firebush or pentas in containers will increase the action. Use the pentas for the shade and the firebush for the sun.

The feisty birds will battle for the dominant position at the feeders and nectar-producing plants. The dogfights conducted by the visiting birds are exciting to witness for children and adults. Expect the action to continue through October.