**October Gardening Calendar**

Calvin R. Finch, Ph.D., Horticulturist and Director

Texas A&M Water Conservation and Technology Center

It is time to plant broccoli, cabbage, kale, collards, chard, cauliflower, and Brussels sprout transplants in the garden. You can plant mustard, lettuce, radishes, rutabagas, turnips, beets and carrots by seed.

My favorite greens are beets, collards, and chard. Beets do not provide as much production as collards or chard, but if you plant them thick, you can harvest the extra plants that are thinned out. Collards, chard, lettuce, kale, turnips, and mustard can be harvested leaf by leaf as you need them all winter. As long as two-thirds of the leaf surface remains, the plant will replace the leaves that are harvested.

Bright Lights Swiss Chard has a special attraction, its stems are yellow, pink, orange, red, and green, making a showy ornamental in addition to nutritious greens. In my experience, Swiss chard is also the longest lasting green into the summer. June-harvested chard can still be palatable.

Hold off planting spinach transplants until next month.

Keep your tomatoes, green beans, peppers, summer squash, and sweet corn well watered and fertilized. A cup of slow-release or winterizier lawn fertilizer spread along an 8 foot row every 3 weeks will do the job. Also, continue your seaweed-extract and neem-oil sprays on your tomatoes to slow down the development of spider mite populations.

In theflower garden, it is time to plant snapdragons, stocks, dianthus, calendulas, ornamental kale, and ornamental cabbage transplants. The tough petunias such as Wave, VIP, and Laura Bush will also work. If the zinnia, marigolds and vinca in the flower garden are still attractive, it will be a tough decision about replacing them. They will continue to look good as long as the weather stays mild.

One option is to remove half of the hot-weather flowers to make room for some of the cool-weather plants. The winter annuals perform better through the winter if they are planted now. The exceptions are cyclomen, pansies, and primula. Wait until November to plant them.

October is the lawn fertilization month. As close to the first as possible, apply a winterizer fertilizer such as 15-5-15. The winterizer application does not translate into growth that you will have to mow, but it is important for cold resistance in the winter and for fast green-up in the spring.

Early autumn is the best time to plant shade trees and new shrubs. The root system has time to develop before the plant faces the challenge of a hot summer. Consider live oak, Texas red oak, Mexican white oak, cedar elm, Mexican sycamore, chinkapin oak, or Chinese pistache. Among the best shurbs for shade are viburnum, standard pittosporum, Buford holly, dwarf Chinese holly, nandina, and dwarf yaupon holly. Hollies, nandinas, Texas mountain laurel, and pomegranate are good for planting in the sun. Also consider the modern tough roses such as Carefree Beauty (Katy Road), Knockout, and Belinda’s Dream, as well as the old-fashioned roses like Martha Gonzales, Mrs Dudley Cross, and butterfly rose. They are great additions to the sunny part of the landscape.

Selection may be limited in the fall, but there are often good sales at area nurseries.

Don’t forget to plant wildflower seeds to areas in full sun where the weed cover is gone because of thin soils and dry weather. The seed will germinate as long as it reaches the soil in full sun. The soil does not need to be prepared.