

October Gardening Calendar

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It is time to plant your wildflower seed. Select a site to spread the seed where the seed will make contact with the soil. That means an area that is not covered with sod or thick weeds. The soil can be disked but it does not need to be. Most wildflowers require full sun to prosper but a few like *Salvia coccinea* and blue curl will grow in sun or shade. *Salvia coccinea* is not eaten by the deer and blooms over a long season into the fall. Blue curl blooms early in the spring. It is an excellent nectar source for butterflies and hummingbirds.

Wildflower seed is available in single species packages or regional mixes from area nurseries and internet suppliers like Wildseed Farms or Native American Seed. Among the wildflowers are poppies, larkspur, four o-clock, bluebonnets, Mexican hat, prairie verbena, bee balm, coreopsis, and wine cups.

Expect the Monarch butterfly migrants to visit your landscape this month if you have nectar sources such as zinnia, lantana, porter weed, mist flower, duranta, milkweed, salvia, and Mexican flame vine available.

Fertilize the lawn early in the month if it has escaped the drought and greened up. Use a “winterizer” lawn fertilizer such as 18-6-12. “Winterizer” also works to side dress your vegetables through the winter. If the temps stayed hot and the soil dry through September, you still have an opportunity to apply a pre-emergent herbicide such as Dimension or Amaze early in October. The material will reduce the germination of both grassy and broad-leaf winter weeds such as bedstraw, rescue grass, henbit, thistle, and beggar’s lice.

Prepare the garden bed for the winter vegetables by applying 10 cups of a slow release lawn fertilizer such as 19-5-9 and 2 inches of compost for each 100 sq. ft. of bed. Plant broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, chard, Chinese cabbage, collards, kale and other greens by transplant. Spinach also is best when grown from transplants but wait until next month to plant the favorite green. Use seed for lettuce, turnips, rutabagas, beets, radishes, and carrots. If you have greens growing in the garden you can expect cabbage loopers to feed on the foliage, control them with one of the many Bt products. The key to lettuce germination is to place the seed on the soil surface without covering it with soil.

Your hot weather flowers such as cosmos and zinnias could continue blooming until December, but you can also plant the cool weather flowers such as snapdragons, stocks, dianthus, alyssum, and calendula can be planted now. They are all sun requiring plants. Wait to plant pansies in the sun and cyclamen in the shade until November. They do not fare well in the frequent October warm spells.

October is the beginning of the best time to plant shrubs and shade trees. The plants can develop a root system before they face the challenge of a South Texas summer.