

September Gardening Calendar

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Comply with your community's drought restrictions. Most, including San Antonio's were designed to reduce water use to the level required without permanently sacrificing any part of your landscape. Remember that Bermuda, zoysia and buffalo grass can be allowed to go dormant by withholding irrigation and they will recover when the rains resume. St Augustine will survive with irrigation once every two weeks. Use the flexibility allowed by hand watering to give special attention to priority water sensitive plants.

September is the month for the beginning the winter garden. Consider planting broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, collards, kale, Swiss chard, and cabbage by transplants. Use seeds for lettuce, beets, radishes, turnips, carrots, and rutabagas. Prepare the soil by incorporating 2 inches of compost and 10 cups of slow release lawn fertilizer (19-5-9 works well) into every 100 sq. ft. of bed.

Remember that when you plant lettuce seed it should not be covered with soil. It needs to be in the open for it to germinate.

Your fall tomatoes will respond to cooler temperatures at night with thickening leaves and blooms. Peppers and eggplant will resume production of the larger fruit that was being produced before the spell of 100-degree days we experienced in July and August. Okra production is related to day length which will be shortening but lots of pods should still be available for harvest in September.

If you want to prevent winter weeds such as rescue grass, annual bluegrass, bedstraw, thistle, dandelions, henbit, beggars' lice, and chickweed. Apply a preemergent herbicide to the lawn, perennial beds, and shrub borders. There are products designed to prevent germination of grassy weeds, and some for grassy weeds. A few such as Dimension, XL, and Amaze do well for both. Review the labels of the available products at your favorite nursery to select the right product for your needs.

September is also a good time to plant wildflower seeds. Keep in mind that preemergent herbicides will prevent weeds from germinating but they will also prevent wildflower seeds from growing so keep preemergents away from wildflower plantings.

You can buy seed of your favorite wildflowers, but it often works best to obtain wildflower mix designed for Texas or a Region. Germination of specific seed varieties is dependent on weather and other conditions so a mix offers one or more seeds of plants that will take advantage of whatever conditions that occur in a year.

Consider phacelia seed if you encourage butterflies and are looking for a nectar source that fills the early spring gap before mistflower, zinnias, and milkweed reach full bloom. Phacelia is also shade tolerant. Salvia coccinea is also a desirable selection because it blooms over a long season into the fall and it is shade tolerant. S. coccinea is included in most wildflower mixes. You may have to go to an internet seed retailer for phacelia if it is not available from a gardening buddy.

To be successful with most wildflower seed, apply it on sites in full sun where there is a minimum of organic material and the seed can be both in the sun and make soil contact.

In the sunny flower gardens zinnias, moss roses, purslane, vinca, and marigold will prosper. Pentas, and begonias may have declined if they received even a small amount of sun during each day of the 100-degree spell, but they should perk up in September if you can keep them watered.