

October Gardening Calendar

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If you did not plant your winter vegetable transplants and seeds or if some did not germinate or survive, go ahead and plant them again in October. It is also a good idea to plant second and even third sets of seeds such as radishes because they mature so quickly. Quite often leaf lettuce can fail to germinate if the soil temperature is too hot or if the seed is covered with soil. Reseed, as necessary.

Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, collards, and Chinese cabbage transplants should be in place along with seeded carrots, beets, rutabagas, lettuce, and turnips. Late in the month spinach transplants can be planted if the temperatures cool down enough. November is not too late for spinach.

It works best when the preemergent herbicide for winter weeds in the lawn and shrub borders are applied in early September, but it will do a reasonable job if it is spread now. Select the preemergent that identifies your most notorious weeds as one of its targets. For example, Amaze emphasizes control of grassy weeds such as annual bluegrass, but it also lists and does a good job in preventing henbit and chickweed. Seek the advice of a knowledgeable staff person at your favorite nursery but also review the label of a product before you purchase it. In addition to Amaze consider Dimension if grassy weeds are your main problem, or Gallery if the main issue is broadleaf weeds.

October 1 is the recommended time to apply fertilizer to your lawn. There is a special formulation identified as "winterizer" recommended for this application. The "winterizer" should offer its nutrients in a 3-1-2 ratio with a fast release source of nitrogen. Formulations such as 18-06-12 and 15-05-10 are among those available. The first number is the percentage of the nitrogen source in the bag.

The nitrogen is a fast release form because the grass at this time of the year must absorb and organize the nutrients in the plant quickly before it is threatened by cold weather. The nitrogen and other nutrients are not used for growth at this time of the year but are structured and stored in forms to contribute to cold tolerance and then a fast green-up in the spring.

Your lawn will not require much mowing in the fall and winter unless you are encouraging a sustainable winter lawn of rescue grass, annual blue grass, and/or horseherb. Supporters of such a winter lawn are gardeners who have decided not to irrigate, have shallow soil, and considerable shade. If conditions are right such a lawn can look good and is easy to manage. For more information seek out my article on the topic from the archives of my articles on plantanswers.com. Continue to mow your winter lawn at the same height as your summer lawn.

It is not too late to plant wildflower seed for germination this fall and flowers next spring. Select one of the Texas mixes or your favorite varieties from the local nursery. For large quantities or even wider choices of seed varieties visit websites for Wildseed Farms in Fredericksburg (wildseedfarms.com) or Douglas King Seed Co in San Antonio (dkseed.com)

October is a big hummingbird and butterfly month. If you have sugar water feeders and nectar plants such as firebush, firespike, penta, and porterweed on the patio expect three kinds of hummingbirds- black-chinned, ruby-throated, and rufous. To meet the needs of the Monarchs and other butterflies

duranta, zinnias, milkweed, mistflower, and lantana work well. All the plants can be purchased in bloom at your favorite nursery.