

October in the Tallahassee Garden

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Fall is for planting. The cooler weather makes fall the ideal time for planting most trees, shrubs and perennials. By planting in the fall, you give the plants several months to develop roots to support the new growth in the spring. Remember that winter is a time of rest for most plants.

Don't fertilize again until spring and water only as needed. Be aware, though, that if we have periods of drought during the fall and winter, you can easily lose newly established plants that aren't watered.

Shrubs and Trees: As the leaves and pine straw begin to fall, gather them for use as mulch. To prevent rot when mulching shrubs and plants, keep the mulch away from the main stem or trunk and don't pile it deeper than two or three inches. If you are buying pine straw, check with your supplier to be sure that it is this year's straw. It should look and smell fresh. Old pine straw will decompose quickly and will need to be replaced sooner.



Flowers: Plant seeds throughout the fall for late winter and early spring bloom. Consider sowing sweet alyssum, bachelor buttons, poppies, sweet peas and larkspur. Pansies, snapdragons, petunias and calendula should be planted early for fall and winter bloom. These are nice in combination with ornamental cabbage or kale. For spring bloom plant aquilegia, perennial candytuft, dianthus, Shasta daisy, and stock. Spring and summer blooming perennials to plant now include purple coneflower, daylily, rudbeckia, **ruellia**, salvias, obedient plant, gaura, phlox, tibouchina and yarrow. Divide and transplant

daylilies, lirioppe, ajuga, iris and other perennials. As a rule of thumb, if it blooms in the spring, divide and transplant in the fall, and vice versa. Root bedding plants now. Annuals that are easily rooted include begonias, impatiens, coleus, and geraniums. Remove lower leaves from a three-inch cutting, dip in rooting hormone and stick in a good rooting medium such as one-half sphagnum peat moss and one-half sand, perlite or vermiculite. Keep moist in a shady spot. Protect from cold weather.

Lawn care: If winter weeds are usually a serious problem in your lawn and you need to apply a pre-emergent herbicide, apply it late this month. Don't forget to water if the weather is dry. If you think you need to apply a "winterizer" fertilizer, do it before mid-October. Be sure the fertilizer has little nitrogen (the first number in the fertilizer ratio), such as a 5-0-15 or 5-0-20.

Vegetables: Plant perennial herbs such as parsley, sage, thyme, and rosemary. Sow seeds of dill fennel, chervil and cilantro. Now is the time to plant strawberries. Cool season vegetables to plant now include beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, collards,

kohlrabi, mustard, bulbing onions, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard and turnips. Soak the seeds for spinach and Swiss chard overnight before planting.

Container Plants: Begin getting container plants ready for the colder weather. If you will be taking them inside later on, move the container to break the roots away from the ground where they may have been in contact with the soil. Move them to a shady location to get them ready for reduced light levels inside. Cut them back if necessary. Check for pests and disease and treat if necessary.

For more information about gardening in our area, visit the University of Florida IFAS Leon County Extension website at <http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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