

September in the Tallahassee Garden

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September 7, 2003

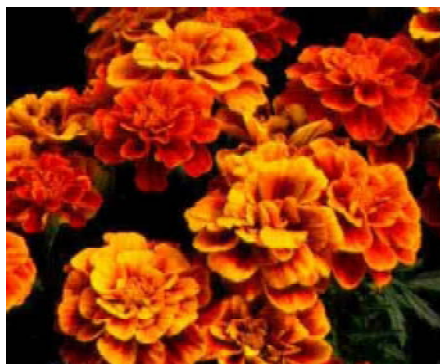


Photo by West Virginia University Extension: "Marigolds planted now will provide color until our first hard freeze."

September marks the beginning of our fall gardening season.

Before you get carried away with gardening fever try to take care of the basics. Clean established beds and replenish mulch materials where needed. Remove faded annuals and cut back perennials that have finished flowering. Before planting new plants prepare your beds. Loosen soil as deeply as you can and incorporate organic matter if needed. Don't fertilize the soil. Wait and fertilize the plants two to three weeks after planting. Shrubs and Trees: Container-grown trees and shrubs can be planted now but you need to keep them well watered. Very late fall to winter is the ideal time to move a shrub from one place in the yard to another. If you plan to transplant trees and shrubs this winter you may root prune them this month. Cut a circle around the base of each plant just outside the drip line. Keep the plant well watered. Save major pruning jobs for mid-winter. Don't prune any more this year except for cosmetic reasons.

Flowers: Amaryllis, bearded iris, daylilies and perennials that haven't finished blooming are best divided and transplanted during September. Plant marigolds for color until cold weather. Starting in late September, plant annuals such as petunias, flowering cabbage and kale, pansies, snapdragons, and dianthus for cool weather color. In late September through November, you may sow seeds of phlox, alyssum, bachelor buttons, calendulas, candytuft, larkspur and wild flowers. Plant perennials such as salvia, gloriosa daisy, shasta daisy, coreopsis, chrysanthemums, purple cone flowers, hosta, or verbena. Refrigerate tulip bulbs until planting in late fall.

Vegetables: Plant fall vegetables now, including Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, collards, mustard, beets, kale, endive, escarole, kohlrabi, leeks, turnips, radishes, lettuce, green onions, spinach, and edible-podded peas. If you plant early in the month, you may even still add tomatoes, squash, beans, and cucumbers. For bulbing onions sow seeds now for transplanting into the garden in November or early December or wait until then and buy sets for planting. Choose varieties of "short day" onions such as Granex, the variety that is used for producing Vidalia onions. Plant herbs such as chives, oregano, parsley, sage, rosemary and tarragon.

Fruit: Give citrus and other fruit trees the last fertilization of the year, giving new growth time to mature before the cold weather. If you've considered planting grape vines now is the time to sample the various muscadine cultivars to see which you like. Check the farmers' markets, local nurseries which may have fruit bearing vines, u-pick vineyards or friends and neighbors who grow grapes. Many new cultivars adapted to our area have been developed by Florida A&M University Center for Viticulture and the University of Florida Institute for Food &

Agricultural Sciences.

For more information on muscadine grapes visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG215>.

Lawn Care: Proper cultural practices are your most important tool in managing lawn problems. Mow weekly with a sharp blade on a high setting but don't mow when the grass is wet. If you haven't fertilized since spring, an application of a low-nitrogen, high potash (potassium) winterizer fertilizer, such as 5-0-15 or 5-0-20 could help now. Avoid high-nitrogen types of fertilizer in the fall. Remember, nitrogen is the first number in the fertilizer analysis.

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