

Prepare for Fall Gardening
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Fall is an excellent season for gardening along the Gulf Coast. Though spring is the time of peak interest, some projects and activities pay off better when done at this time of year. There is something to do in every part of the landscape and garden.

Prepare for establishing cool season flowering annuals in October. Transplanting in the fall allows several weeks of growth and conditioning so that they better withstand frosts and freezes this winter. Well maintained cool season flowering annuals provide welcome color for many weeks during the following late winter and early spring. In order to be ready, clean out and prepare planting beds and locate sources of healthy bedding plants in September. Suggested winter hardy species include petunia, pansy, snapdragon, delphinium (including larkspur), stock, dianthus, foxglove and Shasta daisy.

Establish hardy flowering perennials by planting container plants or by digging and dividing crowded clumps. September is the best month for dividing daylilies and the planting of amaryllis bulbs.

The cool season vegetable planting season begins in late August and continues through February, depending upon the species. During early fall set out plants of broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, collards, endive, escarole, lettuce, strawberry and onions. Plant seeds of beets, carrots, cauliflower, kale, kohlrabi, leek, mustard, parsley, radish, spinach and turnip. Fall vegetable gardens are generally easier to maintain than the conventional summer garden. Anyone who has become frustrated when growing vegetables in the summer should try fall and winter production.

Flowering perennial beds should be cleaned before winter. Pull weeds, apply mulch and remove diseased foliage and branches.

Any fall fertilizing of the warm season lawn and flowers should be completed by late September. Use only a low-nitrogen, high potassium fertilizer on lawns now, such as 5-0-15 or 5-0-20.

Sow seed of annual ryegrass between mid-October and mid-November if a green lawn is desired during winter. Though the over-seeding of cool season grass provides good color, this is not for everyone. Be prepared to mow, irrigate, fertilize and even provide disease control on occasion.

Get ready for the planting of wildflowers in November. Choose a Southern or Southeastern seed mixture containing coreopsis, gaillardia, coneflower, Drummond phlox and black-eyed Susan.

Add mulch to maintain a 2 to 3 inch layer in shrub beds and around young trees. Fresh coarse organic materials such as bark or pine needles make good mulch. Most local pines shed old foliage during October so there is normally a good supply of pine needles at that time.

Big shrub pruning jobs should be delayed until late winter or spring. Heavy pruning during the fall stimulates new growth that is subject to winter injury. The removal of unusually long branches and light pruning to improve the shrub's appearance can be done in the fall.

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