

August in the Tallahassee Garden



Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: *Torenia* 'Summer Wave' is an excellent annual flower to plant now. It forms a low groundcover covered with purple or blue flowers.

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The hot days of August may not be the best time to plant, but with plenty of water and mulch, plants can be planted now and still thrive.

Shrubs and Trees: Check the thickness of mulch around your shrubs, flowers and newly planted trees. Lots of rain and hot weather will cause organic mulches to break down quickly, so replenish your mulch periodically. Mulch lowers soil temperature, helps retain moisture, and helps prevent weed seed germination. Fertilize young trees and shrubs, those in the ground less than three years, with a fertilizer such as 15-0-15. Keep the faded flower stems trimmed off hydrangeas. If the hydrangeas are too tall, now is a good time to cut them back.

Flowers: Annuals to plant for fall color include torenia, periwinkles, sun coleus, marigolds, melampodium, pentas, *Zinnia angustifolia*, and annual salvias. Fall blooming perennials to plant now include the perennial salvias, *Helianthus angustifolia* (swamp sunflower), and sedum 'Autumn Joy', to name a few. Spring-planted flowers which have passed their prime should be cut back at least half-way to the ground, especially impatiens, begonias, and salvias. Plant fall blooming bulbs as soon as they become available. Look for *Lycoris radiata* (red spider lily), *Rhodophiala bifida* (ox-blood lily) *Colchicum* (autumn crocus) and *Sternbergia* (autumn crocus). Late in the month begin dividing daylilies, amaryllis and crinums if they need it. Signs indicating overcrowding are smaller and/or fewer blooms than in the past.

Roses: A late-summer pruning of rose bushes can be beneficial. Prune out dead canes and any weak, brushy growth. Cut back tall, vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. After pruning, apply fertilizer, and water thoroughly. If a preventive disease-control program has been maintained, your rose bushes should be ready to provide an excellent crop of flowers this fall.

Lawn care: If your St. Augustine lawn appears to need it, late August is a good time to fertilize. Use a fertilizer such as 15-0-15 or a low-nitrogen, high-potassium winterizer fertilizer like 5-0-15. Apply at a rate not to exceed one-half pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet. Centipede grass probably doesn't even need another fertilization now if you fertilized it in April. In centipede lawns, keep an eye out for spittlebugs. These small black bugs have black wings with two orange stripes. Damage appears as yellowed streaks down grass blades which eventually turn brown and give the lawn a dull, brownish cast. If you have high populations of spittlebugs you will need to apply an insecticide for control. Be sure to use an insecticide that has directions for use on lawns and follow the directions. Bayer Advanced Garden Power Force Multi-Insect Killer, Real-Kill Multi-Purpose Lawn & Garden Insect Killer, and Spectracide Triazicide Soil and Turf Insect Killer are examples of several lawn insecticides.

Vegetables and Herbs: Peppers and tomatoes planted earlier this year will not set fruit during the heat of summer, even though they may still be flowering. If the plants remain healthy, they will set fruit again once temperatures stay below 90 degrees. Side dress established, healthy plants with fertilizer and keep them watered to encourage new growth. Begin preparing for fall planting. Remove old plant material, pull back the mulch, add compost, chopped leaves or other organic material and dig it into the soil. In the second half of the month plant green beans, summer squash, cucumbers and okra; transplant tomato, pepper and eggplant seedlings. In late August plant broccoli, collards, mustard, cabbage, leek, potatoes and turnips. Sow seeds of cool-weather herbs such as chives, parsley, garlic chives, cilantro, sage, thyme and dill.

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