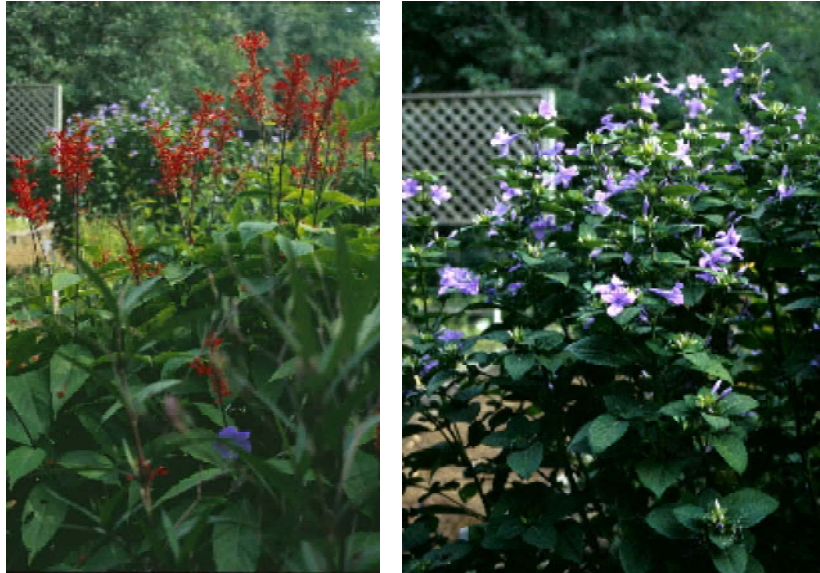


September in the Tallahassee Garden



Fire spike's bright red spikes of flowers in the foreground, along with the lavender blooms of Phillipine violet, are two popular fall-blooming perennials for our area.

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For southern gardeners, September brings the same feelings of joy and renewal that our northern counterparts feel in the spring. Its time to get out in the garden again and begin getting our gardens in order and planting.

Shrubs and Trees: If you have unwanted volunteer saplings, cut them down when they are young. If you wait too long you may need a chain saw or a professional tree service to do the job. Container-grown trees and shrubs can be planted now or later in the season. Some natives that have lovely fall foliage include American beech, hickory, sassafras, Florida red maple, oakleaf hydrangea, and Elliott blueberry. Of course we often have to wait until December for the peak of fall color and even then the extent and depth of color depends on the amount of rain and cold weather we have before then. For colorful berries, plant American beautyberry, yaupon holly, or American holly. If you plan to transplant trees and shrubs this winter, while they are dormant, you should root prune them now.

Flowers: Plant paperwhite narcissus, snowflakes (*Leucojum vernum*), Easter lilies, Madonna lilies, amaryllis bulbs, and Louisiana irises. Divide and replant overgrown clumps of perennials that have finished blooming. Lift and divide daylilies. To separate irises, dig, cut the foliage back to three inches, and allow the rhizomes to air dry for a few days before replanting. Plant petunias and dianthus.

Try something new when choosing perennials for planting this fall. Some fall-blooming perennials which have done well in the Leon County Extension Demonstration Garden include: lion's ear (*Leonotis leonurus*), which has bright orange flowers; cigar flower, (*Cuphea micropetala*), which has orange flowers shaped like tiny cigars, tipped with yellow; Phillipine violet (*Barleria cristata*) which blooms with a profusion of dark lavender flowers; and fire spike, (*Odontonema strictum*), a four to five foot plant topped with tubular red flowers.

September in the

Ornamental grasses are also lovely additions to the fall garden. They combine beautifully with fall-flowering perennials in the landscape. Muhly grass, *Muhlenbergia capillaris*, is a native, with pinkish-purple flower heads.

Vegetables: Pull up and throw away summer vegetable plants that have finished producing. Don't till them into the soil. You could end up spreading diseases. Vegetables need fertile, well cultivated soil. Till as deeply as possible before planting. Add organic soil amendments such as compost or well-chopped leaves. Anything you add should be well-composted and thoroughly mixed into the soil.

Plant fall vegetables now, including broccoli, cabbage, carrots, collards, endive, escarole, leeks, turnips, radishes, mustard, beets, kale and green onions. If you plant early in the month, you can still plant tomatoes, squash, beans, and cucumbers. Plant herbs such as chives, oregano, parsley, sage, rosemary and tarragon. Wait until next month to plant strawberries.

Lawn care: If your lawn needs fertilizing again before winter, do it before the end of September. If you haven't fertilized since spring, an application of a low-nitrogen, high potash (potassium) winterize fertilizer, such as 5-0-15 or 5-0-20 could help now. Avoid high-nitrogen types of fertilizer.

If your lawn is developing areas that yellow and then turn brown, and you cannot find any sign of insect pests, then the problem may be a fungus disease, particularly if you have been receiving very frequent rains or if you have been over-watering. Closely examine the grass blades to see if they appear to be rotting off where they're attached to the stem. If so, a fungus disease is a good possibility.

For information on appropriate treatment consult David Marshall's article "[Late Summer and Fall Lawn Problems](#)" on the University of Florida/IFAS Leon County Extension website.

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