

October in the Tallahassee Garden



Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: October and November are the months for planting seeds of flowers such as larkspur.

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October is a glorious month for gardening in Tallahassee . As the weather cools the garden beckons. It's a great time for planting trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetables. What we do now can determine how our gardens look all winter and spring and how our landscape will look for years to come. Fall is here so go outside and enjoy.

Shrubs and Trees: Fall is the best time to plant new trees and shrubs. Sasanqua camellias are a lovely addition to the landscape. Recommended cultivars are Yuletide, Pink Snow, Sparkling Burgundy (an early fall bloomer), Cotton Candy, Shi Shi Gashira (the most popular dwarf sasanqua), Snow on the Mountain, Bonanza, and Maiden Blush. Use falling tree leaves as mulch or begin a compost pile with them. Pine straw

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makes excellent mulch. Scale insects on broad leafed evergreens such as camellia, gardenia, holly, citrus and euonymus can be effectively controlled by spraying with dormant oil used according to label directions.

Annuals and Perennials: In late October sow seeds of annuals such as sweet peas, bachelor buttons, larkspur, sweet alyssum, poppies, and annual wildflowers directly in the ground. As the weather begins to cool plant winter annual bedding plants such as pansies, snapdragons, dianthus, flowering kale and cabbage, statice, stock, digitalis (foxglove), delphinium, and petunias. You can still plant garden mums for fall color. Plant all types of perennials now. Planting in the fall allows the plants to develop good root systems during the cooler months and get off to a good start in the spring.

Bulbs, Corms, and Tubers: When buying spring flowering bulbs look for large fresh bulbs. Bulbs which can be planted right after purchasing include Dutch iris, grape hyacinths, lycoris, anemones, ranunculus, daffodils, the smaller flowered jonquils, and paper whites. Recommended daffodils for north Florida are Soliel d'Or, Carlton, Sweetness, Ice Follies and Golden Dawn. Tulips and other hyacinths need to be refrigerated at least 45 to 60 days before planting in December.

Vegetables and Herbs: Early in the month plant mustard, spinach, lettuce, and Chinese cabbage. Other vegetables to plant throughout the month include beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, collards, garlic, kohlrabi, bulbing onions, green onions, radishes, shallots, Swiss chard, and turnips. When planting onion sets choose the short day varieties such as Excel, Texas Grano, Granex, White Granex and Tropicana Red. Keep onions well weeded. Plant herbs including parsley, oregano, sage, thyme, rosemary, and sweet marjoram. Sow seeds of dill, fennel, chervil, arugula, and cilantro. Be sure to dig sweet potatoes before frost.

Lawn Care: Apply a pre-emergent herbicide such as atrazine late this month if winter weeds were a problem last year. Follow label directions and precautions very carefully. Don't forget to water if the weather is dry. If you think you need to apply a "winterizer" fertilizer, and you didn't fertilize in August or September, do it before mid-October. The fertilizer should have little nitrogen (the first number in the fertilizer ratio), such as a 5-0-15 or 5-0-20.

Fruit: Strawberries should be planted during October and November. The plants are very cold hardy, producing a full sized plant by spring and producing berries late February through May. Use only "short day" strawberry varieties. These include Florida 90, Tioga, Sequoia and Florida Belle. When planting the bare-root plants set them with the crown slightly high.

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