

## September in the Tallahassee Garden



Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: *Chrysocephalum* 'Flambe Yellow' is a good background planting for blue pansies, nemesia, and other low-growing cool-season annuals.

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Temperatures and humidity are still high this month, so save heavy garden chores for cooler weather. September is the ideal time to prepare beds and soil for planting next month when temperatures are lower. Enrich beds with compost or peat moss, and add coarse sand if drainage is poor. If you haven't done a soil test in several years (or ever!), consider doing one now. Soil test kits can be picked up at the Leon County Extension Office, 615 Paul Russell Road. The cost is \$7.00 per sample.

### Right plant, right place

This is a good time to plant fall perennials like chrysanthemums, firespike (*Odontonema strictum*), Philippine violet (*Baleria cristata*), and cigar flower (*Cuphea micropetala*). Vines that provide fall color are sky flower (*Thunbergia grandiflora*) and pink trumpet vine (*Podranea ricasoliana*). Later in the month, cool weather annuals like petunias, dianthus, diascia, nemesia, verbena, *Chrysocephalum* 'Flambe Yellow', and pansies can be planted for color that will last throughout the fall, winter and early spring. Plant all in full sun for best results. Cool season vegetables to plant this month include beets, cabbage, lettuce, onions, collards, spinach and broccoli. Herbs to try are tarragon, mint, rosemary, and basil. Plant vegetables and herbs in a sunny spot.

### Fertilizer

Continue to lightly fertilize vegetables, herbs and annuals monthly with a 15-0-15 product. Lawns may be fertilized with a winterizer this month; use a 5-0-20 or similar product. Fertilize citrus trees now, so new growth can mature before we have a frost.

## Water

Since September is typically a very warm month container plants with fully developed roots may need almost daily watering during dry periods. Lawns and established trees and shrubs need an application of one half to three quarters of an inch of water weekly. Newly-planted plants and trees need water more frequently, two to three times per week. Just be sure not to let the rootball dry completely. A rain gauge is helpful in keeping track of rainfall so you know exactly how much water your landscape is getting. Keep in mind that rainfall amounts vary greatly. One area of town can receive torrents when another gets no rain at all.

## Mulch

Check mulch levels and aim for a three to four inch layer in beds and around trees. Use an eco-friendly mulch like pine straw, and avoid cypress mulch. Cypress stands are sometimes destroyed in the production of mulch.

## Maintenance

Avoid severe pruning this month. New growth may not have time to harden off before the first frost, resulting in damage to trees and shrubs. Continue to deadhead annuals and do light pruning.

## Wildlife

If you are interested in attracting wildlife to your yard, provide a water source like a birdbath or shallow fountain. Keep a brush pile which provides protection from predators for birds and small mammals. Consider putting up bird houses, bat houses, butterfly boxes as well as bird and hummingbird feeders. When selecting plants use those that attract birds, hummingbirds and butterflies.

Take heart! Cooler weather is on the way!

For more information visit:  
<http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu>

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