The rain showers and cooler temperatures we experienced several weeks ago can be seen as indicators that we are close to the end of summer. In preparation for fall there are several lawn care tasks that should be completed.

Early in September consider applying a pre-emergent herbicide to reduce the volume of weeds that you must deal with this winter. Last year we were blessed with bedstraw, rescue grass, thistle, beggar’s lice, annual bluegrass, dandelions, and other weeds. If the rains show up again as predicted we can expect even more weeds than last year.

Most pre-emergent herbicides work to prevent the germination of both broadleaf and grassy weeds, but some specialize. Check out the label for expected impact and required application procedures before you select the product that is best for your needs. Amaze, Dimension, and XL are products that work on both broadleaf and grassy weeds.

Be aware that pre-emergent herbicides don’t know the difference between dandelions and wildflowers so will also prevent germination of wildflowers. The products, however, can generally be used to prevent weeds in perennial beds and shrub borders, as well as the lawn. Check the label carefully to be sure.

At the end of September it is time to apply a “winterizer“ lawn fertilizer. A “winterizer” fertilizer has a 3-1-2 nutrient ratio such as 18-6-12 or 15-5-10. The first number indicates the percentage of the product that is a fast release nitrogen source.

The “winterizer” lawn fertilizer application provides nutrients that contribute to cold hardiness and that are stored for a fast green-up in the spring. The lawn in September switches from a growth to a storage mode in response to reduced day length.

The question always comes up, “Can I use the slow-release lawn fertilizer that is leftover from spring rather than buy new fertilizer especially for the fall?” The answer is “yes” but a better way to use the leftover open bags of slow-release lawn fertilizer may be to use them to fertilize your winter vegetables and flowers.

In terms of other tasks to complete now on the lawn, there is still time to apply a contact herbicide such as Round-up to reduce the amount of lawn and convert the area to a low water planting. The conversion will lower your water bill. Low water use plants such as perennials, shrubs and groundcovers can be planted directly into killed sod. It works as a great mulch.

Visit the new San Antonio Water System landscape website (gardenstyleSA.com) for ideas and program rebates that are available for landscape conversions.