Gardening Calendar for September

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It is time for your roses to begin their fall flush of blooms. To prepare them, do some minimal pruning early in the month to remove dead or injured wood, and remove excessively tall or inconveniently oriented stems. Apply 1 cup of slow or winterizer lawn fertilizer over the root system and for hybrid tea roses restart the weekly fungicide and insecticide spray programs. Old fashioned and modern tough roses usually do fine without the pesticide sprays. A weekly irrigation application will encourage full bloom.

 In the flower garden the zinnias, cosmos, begonias, coleus, pentas, moss roses, and purslane will continue to make a good show until Thanksgiving but you could begin planting the cool weather annuals such as snapdragons, stocks and dianthus in late September.

July and August were hot and dry but it shouldn’t phase your fall tomatoes, if you planted the fast maturing varieties such as Roma Surprise, Surefire, and Lavaca and/or heat setters such as Tycoon, Valley Cat, BHN 968, Phoenix, Celebrity or 444 and kept them well watered. Hopefully some gardeners also planted Red Deuce so we can see if the determinate variety with large flat fruit does as well in the fall as it did this spring. One of the tricks to harvesting large tomatoes in the fall is to protect the plants from the first freeze so they have an extra 3 or 4 weeks to mature the fruit. It is late to plant fall tomatoes but if you can obtain 1gallon plants in the varieties listed, you may be able to harvest a crop.

Peppers, okra, and eggplant should continue to produce all month. If fire ants are hanging around your okra use a fire ant control with Spinosad as the active ingredient. Some formulations are labeled for use in the vegetable garden. Keep the mature fruit removed from eggplant, okra, and peppers so that it keeps setting new tender fruit.

Some gardeners have success in planting the cool weather annuals such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and Swiss chard in late September. Use transplants. Next month is also a good time to plant the cool weather crops.

At the beginning of September apply a pre-emergent herbicide if your landscape was plagued with winter weeds such as rescue grass, thistle, dandelion, bedstraw, or beggar’s lice last year. Review the labels of the herbicides at your favorite nursery for one that prevents growth of the weeds that bothered you the most last winter. Amaze, XL, Portrait, or Gallery are among those that are effective. Generally pre-emergents can be applied to lawns or plantings where the turfgrass, flowers, shrubs and perennials are in place. The herbicide prevents germination of new seeds for a 3 or 4 month period. Review and follow the label requirements.

Near the end of the month fertilize the lawn with a “winterizer” formula with a 3-1-2 ratio such as 15-5-10. This application of nutrients contributes to cold tolerance and a fast spring green-up.

The purple martins have gone south. It is a good time to lower the martin houses and clean them out. Put them back up in February in time for the purple martins to return.

If you do not have one or more sugar water feeders out to supplement your flowers as nectar sources for the hummingbirds, consider setting several out. Hang them from the eaves or a trellis in a location where you can watch the action as the waves of black-chinned, ruby-throated, and rufous hummingbirds visit San Antonio this fall. Mix one part sugar with 4 parts water by volume. Increase the action by placing a firebush in a container in full sun on the patio. If your patio is shady use firespike or pentas.