November Gardening Calendar

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It is an excellent time to plant shade trees and shrubs. Dig the hole as deep as the root ball and 2 to 3 times as wide. Refill the planting hole with the native soil after the root ball has been placed in the hole. Trees and shrubs planted too deep or in a hole where the water does not drain can be a problem. Planting holes in heavy soils that are filled with compost or potting soil allow the water easy entry but may not allow easy drainage.

Consider Texas red oak, Shumard oak, Mexican white oak, cedar elm, Mexican sycamore, Chinese pistache, bur oak, or chinkapin oak. They all live a long time and are relatively disease and insect free. It is best to have a diverse mix of shade tree species in a neighborhood as long as the species can prosper in the soil and climate situation. For more information on the individual species visit plantanswers.com.

If you planted the recommended fall tomatoes at the end of July, you have probably been harvesting BHN 968, Roma Surprise, Lavaca and Surefire for nearly a month now. Tycoons, 444, Phoenix and other heat setting large tomatoes should be providing a few ripe tomatoes with expectations for large numbers by mid-month. Even Red Deuce and Celebrity will produce mature fruit by Thanksgiving. If the birds have found them, pick the fruit early, as soon as it shows any color.

We often get the first freeze in November so be ready to cover the tomatoes along with your lemons and limes. Bed sheets, blankets, and agricultural fiber work well, especially if they are covered with a product like “Planket”. If the forecast is for very low temps, 24degrees F or less, you will need to provide a heat source such as a mechanics light or poultry heat lamp. Strings of holiday lights also work unless they have the new heat- free bulbs.

The broccoli, cabbage, kale, cauliflower, chard, and other greens may be ready for harvest this month. Watch for looper damage and be ready to apply a Bt product. The greens should also be sidedressed with slow-release or winterizer lawn fertilizer.

If you did not plant spinach last month, November is a good time to place transplants in the garden. You can also still plant English peas, carrots, lettuce, beets, radishes and turnip by seed. Remember, the key to successful lettuce germination is that the seed remains uncovered. It needs sun on the seed to germinate in the garden.

For color, November is an ideal time to plant pansies, cyclamen, and primula. Like spinach, they are sensitive to the hot spells that sometimes occur in October. Use cyclamen and primula for very intense color in the shade. The cost of cyclamen and primula is high but the blooms and foliage are worth it. They are especially effective in containers near the front door or patio. Protect pansies, primula, and cyclamen with slug and snail bait.

Keep your sugar water feeders full for the migrating hummingbirds and consider feeding the seed eating birds, such as cardinals and chickadees, sunflower seeds. Use a steel feeder with a weight sensitive perch and you can reduce the consumption of the seed by squirrels and white-winged doves. Feed suet for the insect eaters such as woodpeckers, kinglets, and mockingbirds. Even wrens and warblers will visit a suet block. For a special treat for the goldfinches, offer thistle seed in a tube feeder for the purpose. They will often feed upside down for your entertainment.