

Gardening Calendar for October

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Rains in September bring us back to the average rainfall totals for the year, after being down by 10 inches plus on Sept 1. The lawns greened up, horse herb reemerged, and lots of other weeds as well. Even though we expect the lawn grass growth to be reduced for the fall, your lawn mower and string mower will be needed to keep the weeds in control.

Early October is a good time to fertilize the lawn. The nutrients from a “winterizer” blend will be used by the grass to develop cold tolerance and a fast spring green-up. To reduce the chance of brown patch, cut back on watering and don’t apply sprinkler irrigation in the evening any more. If the brown patch symptom – rounded brown area that is expanding shows up, apply a lawn fungicide. A labeled product will stop the spread of the disease, but the grass may not heal until spring. For a long-term treatment, raise the level of the low spots in the lawn with compost. The low spots are where the disease originates.

It is time to spread wildflower seeds. There are mixes designed especially for Texas or you can purchase seed of your favorite wildflowers such as bluebonnets, poppies, coreopsis, Mexican hat, and wine cups. To be successful the seed must be spread where it can reach bare soil and experience full sun. The soil does not have to be prepared and no fertilization or irrigation is required. Two wildflowers that work in the shade are *Salvia coccinea* and blue curl (*Phacelia*). Both are also excellent nectar sources for butterflies and hummingbirds.

Speaking of butterflies, the Monarchs should be passing through the SA area. They generally don’t lay eggs in the fall, but they favor zinnias, mistflower, duranta, porter weed, Mexican flame vine, milkweed and lantana as nectar sources.

Winter vegetables can be planted in October. Prepare the soil by incorporating 2 inches of compost and 10 cups of a slow release lawn fertilizer such as 19-5-9 in every 100 sq. ft of bed. Use transplants for broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, and Swiss chard. Use seed for carrots, lettuce, beets, turnips, radishes and rutabagas. Wait to plant spinach until late in the month or November. The popular green is very sensitive to the frequent hot spells that occur early in the month. Remember to plant the small seeds on the surface of the soil. Lettuce in particular won’t germinate if covered with soil.

Without fail the cabbage loopers will attack your greens and cabbage related crops. Have the Bt product ready to spray the foliage as soon as any holes appear. Follow label instructions.

The tomatoes that were planted in July and August should be happily setting fruit with the rain and cooler temperatures. Add a side dressing of “winterizer” fertilizer every 3 weeks to keep the nutrient availability high enough to maintain maximum production.

Your zinnias will provide blooms until after Thanksgiving, but it is also a good time to plant snapdragons, stocks, dianthus, petunias, and calendula transplants. Wait until next month for pansies, cyclamen, and primula.

October is one of the best months to plant shade trees. Select a well-adapted variety, dig the hole so the root ball is at the same depth as it was in the container, and cover the root area with mulch. CPS customers can take advantage of the shade tree rebate again in 2018. Check the CPS website or confer with your favorite nursery for more information.