**Hortibull**

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August Calendar

Sometime this month, the earlier the better, you want to plant your fall tomatoes. Select one of the heat setting varieties such as Tycoon, Tygress, BHN 968, Solar Fire or Phoenix. If you can find Surefire, that is another good choice. It is one of the fastest producers of a crop. They always beat the freeze.

Some nurseries will have African marigold (large flowers). They make a great show in the autumn when planted close together (12-18 inches). Planting sturdy plants that aren’t in bloom yet is the best option. The plants grow to their full potential before the blooms start. Growing marigolds in the fall is the best time for Central Texas gardeners because the spider mite presence is less as the autumn progresses.

Several lawn problems show up in August. If you have dead-looking areas, it could be a dry area, grubs or chinch bugs. To figure out which problem it is, start by hand watering the area. If it responds to the extra water and greens up, it is obviously a watering issue.

If the grass on the dead area pulls up like a toupee, the problem is grubs. There is nothing you can do now but put a note on your calendar for next May to apply a soil insecticide. Grubs are susceptible to control when they are small and feeding heavily. At this point in their life cycle, they have emerged as June bugs or are full-size and have stopped feeding.

If the dead areas are in the hottest part of the lawn, the problem is probably chinch bugs. They are a sucking insect. They will be controlled by a soil insecticide.

The end of August is also the time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide to control winter weeds. If the problem in your landscape is rescue grass, annual bluegrass or another of the grassy weeds, consider Amaze or XL. If dandelions, thistle, bedstraw or the other broadleaf weeds are the problem, consider the pre-emergent, Portrait. Whatever herbicide you select, follow the label instructions.

It is hard to believe but the autumn hummingbird action will begin in August and run through November. Keep your hummingbird feeders clean and full of sugar water. Also stock up on hummingbird plants for the patio. For the shade, pentas and firespike are great. For the sun, firebush and zinnias are good choices.