



October Garden Tips 2016

by Thea Fiskin, UC Master Gardener

This is the month to do all those planting projects you have been putting off all summer. Cooler evening temperatures and warm soil make ideal conditions for adding new plants to your garden. Now is the time to plant herbs, shrubs, trees, annual color and a winter vegetable garden.

There are a few exceptions. Frost tender sub-tropical plants, such as bougainvillea, citrus and palms should not be planted until spring.

WINTER ANNUALS: Ornamental kale, pansies, snapdragons, and stock can be planted from six-packs. Keep in mind that these are usually high water plants. Sow seeds of larkspur, California poppies and other wildflowers now before the rain starts. Sweet peas can be started now. Soak seeds overnight before planting. They need a trellis unless you are planting the knee-high variety.

VEGETABLES: Plant beets, collards, carrots, kohlrabi, kale, leeks, lettuce, spinach, onions and peas from seed. Carrots and onions have very small seeds and are easier to plant from seed tapes. If planting from a seed tape, you won't have to thin them later. In the nurseries, there should be six packs of broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale and Swiss chard for transplanting. There are many new varieties such as 'purple sun carrot' and brokali a broccoli/kale hybrid. Try them only if your family is adventurous. Some children will only eat vegetables that are the proper color. Having kids help with the plants will make them more apt to try something new.



PERENNIALS: There are hundreds of drought tolerant plants to choose from and the nurseries in our area are stocked full and are ready to give you great planting advice. Perennials really benefit from being planted now rather than the spring. They will have fall, winter, and spring to get established before the heat of next summer.

WATER WISELY: Nights are growing cooler, so adjust the frequency of your watering. Make sure to deep water all trees until they are dormant. Place a soaker hose around the dripline of the tree, not the trunk. Continue to water until the rains arrive, then plan to shut off your irrigation system until spring.

WEEDS: Keep up your weeding. Winter weeds are starting to sprout. You can apply a preemergent herbicide to help prevent winter weeds.

COMPOST: As you clean up your summer garden, or rake fallen leaves and fruit, put them in your compost pile. Discard any diseased litter and weeds with seeds. Think twice about putting any plant with seeds into your compost bin unless your compost gets very hot. Those seeds will sprout. I have seen "volunteer" tomatoes and watermelon everywhere.



FERTILIZE: Annuals, perennials and fescue lawns will benefit from an application of fertilizer to promote new fall growth. Do not fertilize frost tender plants, such as citrus or palms as the new growth will be susceptible to frost damage this winter.

PRUNE: Cut back perennials if they are finished blooming. Hedges and other evergreen shrubs can be clipped to their desired size and shape.

Finally, get out and enjoy your garden.

September 24, 2016