

September marks the start of autumn when plant growth slows to prepare for winter. Other than springtime, it's also one of the prime planting seasons for many trees, shrubs, perennials and groundcovers. Exceptions include temperature-sensitive subtropicals such as citrus, which are best planted in the spring after any danger of frost has passed.

Chores

Clean any stakes, supports, cages or trellises that supported diseased plants with a 10% solution of bleach to water before storing them.

Apply pre-emergent to lawns to prevent weeds from sprouting.

Fertilize trees, shrubs, groundcovers, roses and warm-season grasses for the last time this year if needed.

Flowers

Continue pinching back begonias, impatiens and geraniums to encourage further blooms.

Divide spring-blooming perennials that produced fewer flowers or have become overcrowded.

For fall-color, plant perennials such as asters, chrysanthemums, daylilies, plumbago or salvia.

Feed roses for last time before winter dormancy.

Fruits & Vegetables

Continue to harvest crops, making sure to pick up and dispose of fallen or decomposing produce to discourage pests and reduce spread of diseases.

Sow seeds of cool-season vegetables such as beets, carrots, fava beans, radishes, spinach, broccoli, cabbage, sugar snap peas and most greens. Prepare for planting in 6 to 8 weeks.

Trees & Shrubs

Transplant perennials, groundcovers, shrubs, vines and trees now so their roots have time to develop before cold winter temperatures arrive. Make sure to keep fresh transplants adequately watered until winter rains take over.

Good choices for fall color include heavenly bamboo, Japanese barberry pistache and smoke tree.

Feed citrus for the last time this year.

Reduce water to succulents to prepare them for winter dormancy.

Pests & Diseases

Walking sticks, citrus leafminer and perseia mites are common in fall gardens.

Powdery mildew also is a problem on vegetables, especially on squash and cucumbers.

Gophers, moles and especially ground squirrels are active now. Trapping is the safest and most effective method for eliminating these rodents. If using bait, zinc phosphide is preferred since unlike other baits, it will not also kill animals that eat rodents poisoned by it.