



October Tips



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This month's milder weather makes heavy work easier to deal with. With the weather on the cooling trend, it becomes easier to spend more time cleaning up and starting seeds for a continual show of flowers and plants that will grow through the winter months. The garden begins to grow slower, but be patient with slow fruiting.

Planning new garden and landscape elements:

Landscapes that require minimum time and money to maintain require thoughtful planning and installation. If you invest early in planning and structures, you'll pay (and work) less later.

- Choose time saving systems and surfaces. Choose structures, plants, ground-coverings, and systems that will help to reduce watering, weeding, trimming, painting, and mowing. Consider mowing, planting, pruning, weeding, watering, raking, and other seasonal chores. What do you want or need to change? Consider low-maintenance alternatives to solve landscape problems, such as an automatic irrigation system for watering the lawn and garden; a deck, paved patio, or ground-covering plants instead of a mowed lawn; and a fence or vine-covered trellis instead of a clipped hedge. Choose brick or stone instead of wood surfaces to eliminate painting chores. Group shrubs and trees into mulched beds to reduce mowing, trimming, and watering. Mulch gardens to prevent weeds.
- Plan ahead for the total growth in height and width of the trees and plants that you chose. Choose only plants that fit the space available when full grown. We all tend to underestimate how quickly and how large a small nursery plant will become. For instance if you choose a tree for your yard, look into how tall the tree will grow. Will the full size tree cause problems by shading too much, dropping leaves, invasive roots, or growing into a structure? These are all things to keep in mind when planning a garden. The same thoughts go for plants such as shrubs which can grow from a few feet to forty feet or more.

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- Select low-maintenance plants, this includes water needs and growth habits. To reduce planting time, plant flowering shrubs or perennial plants that grow back each year instead of annuals that only last one season. Pick plants that thrive in your soil, sun, and climate. Choose plants with features that look good in more than one season, such as flowers in spring, attractive leaf color in fall, and handsome bark in the winter.
- List how you want your garden and landscape to function. How do you plan to use your yard - for barbecuing, vegetable or flower gardening, kids' play activities, or simply viewing from the windows, or even pet activities? Various activities require different ground surfaces, structures, or plantings.
- Make a rough map and list of existing features, such as fences, trees and shrubs, buildings, and paved surfaces, include any existing irrigation. Note problem areas, such as poor views, noise, lack of privacy, steep slopes, or places where plants grow poorly, water run off or poor drainage. You can use this map to change and plan what and where to make changes for the next season.

Vegetables and Fruits:

Sow chard, chives, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuces (try sowing different types for a better selection of greens) Try romaine, small-heading bibb, and butter crunch. These overwinter well with the cool temperatures approaching and are not sensitive to a slight frost. Sow parsley, peas, radishes, spinaches (again a variety can be transplanted) and shallots. Sowing bulb onion seed now will result in larger bulbs in early spring. Store bought onion sets sometimes are stored improperly while on display and do not perform well when planted. Transplant artichokes, asparagus, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, any established herbs, and rhubarb. All these plants will mature before the first hard frost, which gives them a better chance to survive without damage. There are some very interesting varieties to choose from, so plan to look at a garden catalogue to get some great ideas.

- Garlic planted now will develop a strong root system over the winter and leaf production early spring and a nice big bulb come summer. Planting garlic in the spring usually results in smaller heads.
- When transplanting, remember to give the tiny plants enough room to grow large and not be overcrowded.
- Plant strawberries plants with the crown above the soil line and at least one foot apart. Strong roots will develop over winter and with the spring warmth, will grow larger berries.
- Harvest winter squash, pumpkins, and gourds when the vines are dry and the rinds hard. Cut the vines about two inches from the fruit, this will lessen spoilage.
- Harvest potatoes now. You can also leave them in the soil for harvest through the winter. Sweet potatoes can be harvested when the vines turn yellow. Air dry them and store them.
- If you did not fertilize subtropical crops like citrus and avocados in September, do it this month and keep them well watered.

Ornamentals:

Sow or transplant ageratum, alyssum, bachelor's buttons (cornflower), calendulas, campanulas (canterbury bells), candytufts(iberis), chrysanthemums, clarkias, columbines, coralbells, coreopsis, African daisies, delphiniums, dianthus, for-get-me-nots, four-o'clocks, foxgloves, gaillardias, hollyhocks, larkspur, linarias, love-in-a-mist, lunaria, blue marguerites, nierembergias, ornamental cabbage and [kale](#), phloxes, poppies (California, Iceland, Oriental, and Shirley), primroses, rudbeckias, [snapdragons](#), stocks, stokesia, sweet peas, verbenas, [violas](#), and wildflowers.

Most perennials and some annuals can be transplanted or divided and replanted. These include acanthus, agapanthus, Japanese anemone, astilbe, bergenia, bleeding hearts, calendulas, evergreen candytuft, columbine, coralbells, coreopsis, michaelmas, daisies, daylilies, delphiniums, dianthus, dusty miller, foxgloves, heliopsis, helliborus, hollyhocks, bearded irises, peonies, phlox, poppies, primroses,

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rudbeckias, statice, stock, stokesia, veronica, and yarrow. Use a shovel or sharp knife to divide the clumps and separate the plants, then gently pull them apart and replant. Sometimes a spading fork is useful in gently lifting the plants from the soil. Water the new transplants well.

For fall foliage color, some plants include barberry, cotoneaster, nandina, Oregon grape, pyracantha, [Indian hawthorn](#), and viburnum. Trees include Chinese pistache, Chinese tallow, persimmon, Bradford and Aristocrat pear, ginkgo, [fruitless mulberry](#), and sweet gum. Golden rain tree and its relatives (*Koelreuteria species*) are often flowering into October.

Hold off pruning roses until they are completely dormant, usually January. Prune oleander, and dispose of all clippings; do not compost them as they are toxic.

Transplant [azaleas](#) and [camellias](#) if necessary. Transplant hardy evergreens and water them deeply.

Bulbs:

Separate and replant crowded clumps of bulbs to give them more room to grow. Purchase spring blooming bulbs now to be able to buy the best, large size bulbs as soon as they become available. If you can't purchase the best then wait till next year. The seconds and leftovers usually provide disappointing results and can be a waste of money.

General:

Move container plants near a wall to absorb more heat and shield them from wind. For a cover crop of flowers before, during and after spring bulb bloom, sow seeds or plant seedlings of low-growing annual bloomers after you have planted the bulbs. Think of color contrasts such as purple pansies and yellow daffodils or white allysum with red tulips. Some other good choices include calendulas, pansies, Iceland poppies, primroses, dwarf snapdragons, dwarf stock, and violas. Sow the seed thickly, water them in well, cover them with a thin layer of soil or mulch, and keep it moist until the seedlings have a couple of true leaves.

In cooler inland areas, it may be necessary to dig up summer-flowering bulbs such as tuberous begonias, caladiums, cannas, dahlias, gladioli, and tuberose after their foliage had died back or as soon as it is killed by the cold temperatures. They may rot or be damaged by cold, wet soil temperatures. Gently clean the soil off of the corms and tubers. Don't wash them off or force off the tops, they will shrivel and separate on their own. Store them in a cool, dark, and dry place, with low humidity.

Lawns and Groundcovers:

Fertilize cool and warm season lawns by applying a complete fertilizer two times about 4 to 6 weeks apart in the fall. It will promote the lawn's growth and improve its winter color, plus it will help it green up better in the springtime. Also, lower the blade height on your lawn mower to encourage short bushy growth. You can still reseed new cool-season grasses or reseed thin spots in established lawns of these grasses. Check your watering schedule. The cooler daytime temperatures and reduced daylight slow the evaporation from the plants so they will need less water. It is best if the moisture reaches several inches down to fully wet the roots and encourage them to grow deeply. Mow a newly seeded lawn for the first time when the grass gets to be about three inches tall. Be sure the ground is not too soft and moist before mowing so as to not compress the newly planted lawn with mower wheels and foot prints.

Transplant groundcovers to keep the soil covered in landscape zones where a low-growing plant cover that gets no foot traffic is desired. Fall planting enables the transplants to become established in the winter months so they can begin growing next spring.

Pests:

With the cooler temperatures comes snails and slugs, just in time to eat and attack the succulent seedlings. To control these pests see the [UC IPM on snails and slugs](#). It is sometimes best to till up the cool soil to bring over wintering pests to the surface.

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