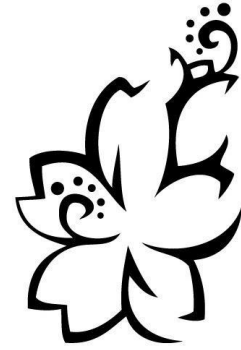
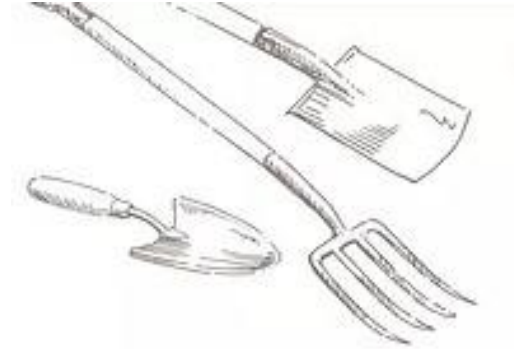


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September Gardening Tips



As we wrap up summer, the most important tip heading into the fall is to protect against wildfire. The wildfire season is already well underway as the warm, dry Santa Ana winds blow from the east and replace any humid tropical days here in Southern California.

If you live in an area that is prone to wildfires, create defensible space around your home by pruning off dead tree limbs, cleaning your yard of brush and dead leaves and cleaning leaves from the

roof and gutter. Defensible space refers to the 50-100-foot area around a house or building where plants (and fuel) are trimmed, reduced or cleared to slow the spread of wildfires.

In California, there are two major planting seasons: **spring and fall**. Spring got plenty of attention especially this year for obvious reasons, but one of the best kept secrets is the beauty of fall planting. September is our transition to fall and the start of the best planting season of the year. Although the nights may begin to cool off eventually, the days are still warm (with occasional blasts of hot weather from Santa Ana winds). With cooler temperatures, it makes it easier to transplant trees, shrubs, and bedding plants. Although trees and shrubs are not actively growing above the ground, they are very busy sending out strong roots and getting themselves established for the spring and summer.

Soil Tips

The basis for every good garden is the soil; if you take care of your soil you won't have to worry about your plants later. The steps and conditions for preparing your soil differ depending on whether you're starting a new planting bed or replanting an existing one, or if you are planting or caring for drought-tolerant, native plants and flowers. Here are a few tips:

Soil Preparation for new beds: Start by turning the soil and watering deeply - continue to water and wait at least two weeks. The loose soil and water should germinate most of weed seeds in the soil. Weed these opportunists out now and you should have an easier time keeping the bed weed-free later. Continue with the soil preparation steps for existing beds below...

Soil Preparation for existing beds: Loosen the soil and add a three-inch to four-inch layer of organic material. This can be home-made compost, bagged compost, or planting mix. Add an all-purpose food and turn in well. If you have a heavy clay soil (as most of us do) add some gypsum; it helps to break up the clay (about 10 pounds for every 100 sq. ft). (This is really the only thing you need to do for soil in a native garden - add gypsum to break up clay. No fertilizer needed.)

To replenish nitrogen in the soil, add bloodmeal, cottonseed meal or some well composted manure. To replenish the phosphorus in the soil, add phosphate or bone meal. Note: Since phosphorus is water-insoluble and nearly immobile in the soil it should be added now when it can be thoroughly mixed into the soil. To figure out how much of each of these amendments you should add follow the instructions on the label. When all the amendments have been added mix them thoroughly into the soil with a spade or spading fork. Now you're ready to plant your garden!

Soil Preparation for Native, Drought Tolerant Plants: These plants can be planted year-round, however fall and winter are more ideal for the gardener aiming for great success because of the cooler temperatures and better chance of rainfall. Soil amendments are not required since natives, especially California-natives, are used to the natural soils. Gypsum, if anything, to break up the clay in soil is about all you need.

Companion Planting

Often, plants will grow better near certain plants than near others or alone. "Companion planting" can drastically improve the use of space, reduce the number of weeds and garden pests by repelling them, and provide protection or create advantage with the elements of weather. This is good news for your garden because it could mean a bigger harvest or more flowers for you!

Some of the most familiar examples of companion planting come from the early Native Americans and later, full scale farming - which provides high yields of crops because of the continuously changing nature and biology of the crops and the soil.

Here are a few tips for companion planting:

- Plant short, shade-tolerant plants beneath taller, bushy plants
- Make sure tall sun-loving plants are at the north of your garden and small ones at the south end to get needed sun exposure
- Plant herbs throughout the garden, especially basil, mint, sage, and dill
- Plant cosmos or marigold to repel pests and introduce beneficial insects such as lady bugs and lacewings that prey on pests
- Rotate your vegetable garden to get two crops instead of one, which will help block out weeds before they have time to settle in

And here are a few Do Not's for companion planting:

- Don't mix dill with tomatoes or carrots
- Don't plant garlic, onions or chives with beans
- Fennel does not mix well with most other plants

New Plantings for Gardens

Cool-season Vegetables: Good choices to plant now include broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, kale, kohlrabi, mustard, lettuce, and other greens.

Cool-season Flowers: For traditional color and beauty try calendula, cineraria, dianthus, delphiniums, Iceland poppies, nemesia, pansies, snapdragon, stock, wild flowers, violas, and violets.

Garden Maintenance

Keep **camellias** well-watered this month. Letting them go dry will cause the buds to drop off depriving you of their beautiful blooms. Some varieties of camellias form many more buds than they can support and so will naturally drop. For the largest flowers, you can start "de-budding" camellias now by removing all but one flower bud from each cluster. Be careful not to remove the growth bud. Growth buds are thin and pointed. Flower buds are round and fat.

Make sure **citrus trees** are adequately and evenly watered during this month. If the roots go dry the result can be split fruits.

Switch **cymbidiums** to a lower nitrogen, higher phosphorous & potassium fertilizer to encourage development of bloom spikes. If your cymbidium leaves are dark green chances are that they are in too much shade. Bring them out into more light until their leaves turn a yellowish color.

If you want to maintain a "blue" **hydrangea** or change your hydrangea's color, you need to start now. Once they start developing buds it is too late. Not all hydrangeas can be made blue. White varieties always stay white and some pinks turn purple instead of blue. The "flowers" on your hydrangea are really modified leaves called bracts just like the so-called flowers of poinsettias. The hydrangea bract color can be modified by adjusting the pH of the soil. A pH 4.5 to 5.0 yields blue flowers, a pH 5.5 to 6.5 yields mauve, and a pH 7.0 to 7.5 yields pink. Hydrangea Blue can be used to lower soil pH. Liberal use of compost will also aid in reducing soil pH.

Always re-fertilize after hard pruning to promote new growth.

Bedding plants are "sure bets" the gardener can count on for fall and winter color especially when little other color has been planned on from the shrubs, trees or perennials. Among those popular bedding plants are **pansies** which give color from the day they are planted either as an explosion of mixed colors or massed together in solid shades of blue, yellow, white, red, rose and pink.

Another great addition to the flower bed is the fairy **primrose** which has a dainty flower with delicate foliage. These flowers provide a choice from white, pink, rose, red or lavender. For a mass of color around the borders and edges try the **viola**. Its cheerful flower is available in purple, white, yellow, and blue. For a taller flower try some snapdragons. They come in heights from 8 inches up to 2 1/2 feet tall.

Roses should be encouraged to continue blooming by making sure they get the supplemental food they need. Feeding them becomes the number one item if gardeners want to have cut roses in their home during October, November and maybe even December. The last meal for the roses should be in early September - no later than midmonth in most areas.

Just because the **tomatoes** are slowing down their production doesn't mean you can't have fresh home-grown vegetables in the winter. Prepare the vegetable plot and get ready for winter vegetable gardening.

Give Your Garden A Fall Cleaning

Don't neglect your fall cleanup chores. Spent annual flowers and vegetables should be removed immediately, pests and diseases thrive in plant debris. You will be surprised how a thorough garden cleaning will reduce insect problems and send you on your way to become fire-wise as well!

