

October's Garden Checklist

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



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PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson

The Galveston County Master Gardeners' 2020 Fall Plant Sale will be conducted online from October 16 through October 17. A variety of vegetable transplants for the fall garden including broccoli (pictured) will be offered.

October will soon arrive and after a long hot summer most people look forward to fall weather. The arrival of October and more consistently cooler temperatures will provide a reinvigorating lift to the spirit.

Most gardeners are now eager (or at least far more willing) to venture out into

the home landscape and garden. In light of this heightened enthusiasm, here are some activities for the fall gardener to consider:

Online Fall Plant Sale: The Master Gardeners' Annual Fall Plant Sale has traditionally been held in mid-October at the Galveston County Fairgrounds in Hitchcock. Due to the

COVID-19 situation, the 2020 Fall Plant Sale will be offered online. Visit the Master Gardener website (<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/>) for more information. The list of available plants for sale will be available on October 3 and online orders will be accepted from 8:00 a.m., Friday,





October 16, through 8:00 p.m., Saturday, October 17.

Plant Cool Season Vegetables:

Transplants of broccoli, Brussels sprouts and cabbage can be set out now until mid-October. A selection of vegetable transplants for the fall garden will be available through the Master Gardener Online Fall Plant Sale. Seeds of beets, carrots, kale, lettuce, mustard, radish, and turnips can be planted and cloves of garlic can be set out throughout October.

Use Diversity for Early Spring Color:

Pansies are cool weather plants and perform best if planted during the last two weeks of October and during November. (Caution: If the weather is unusually warm during the latter part of October, it is advisable to delay planting pansies.)

Pansies need well-drained soil and at least a half day of sun. Also check your nursery or garden center for snapdragons, pinks (also called dianthus), and calendulas. Planted now, they will usually provide a riot of spring color.

Save Caladium Tubers: Caladiums are getting past their prime with the onset of cooler weather. If you plan on saving caladium tubers for another year, be sure to dig them up before the top growth disappears – those tubers can be very difficult to locate after the top growth is gone. Allow the tubers to air-dry for 7-to-10 days in a well-ventilated but shaded area.

After drying, gently remove any attached leaves and large soil particles from the tubers then store in dry peat moss, vermiculite or similar material in a well-ventilated container. Pack so that the tubers do not touch each other. Dust with an all-purpose fungicide to help prevent decay. Store the tubers in an area where temperatures won't drop below 50 degrees F.

Control Cool Season Weeds:

Most lawn weeds that we see during late winter and early spring actually sprout in the fall. They are cool season weeds and, in fact, their germination is stimulated in the fall by the onset of cool temperatures. They grow during winter if temperatures stay warm enough, then produce a crop of seeds in the spring and die out when hot weather arrives.

Use of pre-emergent herbicides to control cool season weeds is effective only if properly timed, i.e., they should be applied very soon after the onset of relatively cool weather conditions. Several pre-emergent herbicides are approved for lawn use and are sold under a variety of commercial labels. Check with your area garden center or feed store for available products. Always read and follow label directions.

Practice Fall Sanitation in the Garden:

October is a good time to reduce the potential for insect and disease problems in next year's

garden. Clean up the garden, removing all plants that have completed their life cycle. All stems, leaves and unwanted fruits of spent tomato, cucumber, okra, pepper and other garden plants should be thoroughly tilled into the soil. The population level of many disease-causing organisms, as well as insect pests, can be reduced by soil incorporation of all remaining top growth.

Plant material can also be either composted or placed out for garbage pickup. The moral of the story is to not leave plant debris (dead leaves, stems, fruits, etc.) on top of the soil over the winter.

Plant Shrubs and Trees:

This is an excellent time for planting container-grown ground covers, shrubs and trees. Thanks to our mild winters, trees and shrubs planted now will have several relatively stress-free months to establish a good root system before hot, dry weather returns.

Divide Spring Flowering Perennials:

October is an excellent time to divide and reset overcrowded beds of perennials such as phlox, Louisiana iris, day lily, amaryllis, and shasta daisy.

