Around the Yard

with Reeve Hobbie, Master Gardener

It's been a tough summer on our landscape. Trees have especially suffered as we see quite a bit of foliage dropping prematurely. Keep watering everything during these dry times, but at the same time follow our City of Austin watering restrictions.

Here is a list of things to do and not do to help you through your garden and lawn management for September and October.

September

DO…

- Keep mowing your lawn on the high side and keep watering in accordance with our city guidelines.
- Watch for brown patch, those patches of light brown grass usually circular in shape, which may appear on St. Augustine grass later this month. If you wish to treat, select a brown patch only fungicide and apply it as directed.
- Prepare flower beds now for the planting of bulbs, roses and perennials in the cooler months ahead. Add several inches of rich composted material and work it in.
- Lightly prune rose bushes just to shape them up. Complete this task in early September.
- Fertilize roses, gardenias and magnolias.
- Rejuvenate those heat-stressed geraniums and begonias with a light pruning, fertilizer and watering. You may see fall blooms.
- Fertilize chrysanthemums every two to three weeks until their buds show color. Then fertilize them weekly and enjoy their fall colors.
- Divide spring and early summer blooming perennials (iris, daisies, gaillardia, daylilies, phlox, violets, liriope, and ferns, to name a few) and spread them into other beds or share with neighbors.
- Sow bluebonnet and other spring wildflower seeds. They'll germinate in early fall, develop good root systems, and will bloom for you in late winter and early spring. They may require occasional watering.
- Plant cool-season vegetables. Fall vegetable gardens are typically better producers than spring vegetable gardens.
- Replenish mulch around trees and shrubs.

DON'T…

- Let up on watering your lawn, gardens and trees. They still require nourishment into the fall.
- Fertilize your lawn until October, if it even needs it then.
- Plant cool weather annuals just yet. Although available in stores, pansies, violas and a few other tender plants usually can't handle the September Texas heat.

October

DO…

- Consider fertilizing your lawn early this month if you believe it is necessary. Use a 3-1-2 ratio fertilizer.
- Dig up your caladiums for winter storing before the soil gets to cool. Tubers will keep well if stored in peat or perlite provided roots don't touch one another and they are kept cool but above 55 degrees.
- Plant winter annuals if you want some color. Plants to consider are pansies, violas, calendulas, snapdragons, dianthus, dusty miller, cyclamen, stock, alyssum, nasturtiums, flowering kale and cabbage.
- Plant spring, summer and fall flowering bulbs. Grape hyacinths, allium, snowflakes, daffodils, jonquils, narcissus, rain lilies, Dutch iris, ranunculus, oxblood lilies, amaryllis and others can go directly into the cool soil. There are some exceptions listed under Don't.
- Fertilize your hollies in late October to encourage red berries and stronger green foliage.
- Set some houseplants outdoors, such as orchids and Christmas cacti, so they may enjoy the lower temperatures and dark nights for a few weeks. When brought back inside, begin fertilizing and then enjoy their winter blooms.

DON'T…

- Plant tulips and hyacinth bulbs, if at all, until they have had 8 to 10 weeks stored in brown paper (can't be plastic) bags in the bottom bin of your refrigerator. Then plant them in mid to late December.
- Completely stop watering your lawn, trees and gardens. Reduce the frequency or amount of water applied during the cooler months, but don't stop altogether.

- Fertilize your lawn after October 15. If you missed this window, you'll have to hold off until April of next year.

If you have questions about your yard or garden, please call Travis County Master Gardeners at 512-854-9600. The person at the other end of the line may not have an immediate answer, but they'll research it and will get back with you.

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