



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Helpful Garden Tips for September, 2024 (September 7, 2024)

by Peyton Ellas, Tulare/Kings Counties Master Gardener

The word "September" comes from the Latin word for "seven." When the calendar had only ten months, September was the seventh month. Although there were attempts to change the name after the Julian (12-month) calendar was adopted in 46 BCE, none of the changes stuck, and in fact, September took over perhaps more appropriate words in other languages that meant "harvest month." In our area, harvesting happens year-round, but there is definitely a feel of Fall as the days grow shorter and nighttime temperatures are cooler. We still have plenty of warm sunny days, however, and that's a good thing because September is a busy month for gardeners in our climate. It is a month of transition, of comings and goings in the garden, of preparation for winter. It is a month for planning, renovating, beginning new landscapes, harvesting, removing summer edible annuals, pruning, and planting.

Planting: Fall is the best season to plant almost everything in your ornamental garden. In our area, we start our Fall planting a week or so before the autumnal equinox on the 22nd. Trees, shrubs, perennials, and ground covers all establish and grow best when planted in the Fall rather than the spring. Do as much new planting as you can beginning this month and continuing until early December. The exceptions are avocados, citrus, cactus, and other frost-tender plants unless you are prepared to protect them all winter and early spring.



In the edible garden, September is a good month to plant the seedlings of broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower that you began last month. You can also start planting more seedlings for succession. You can direct seed carrot, lettuce, parsley, green onions, peas, radish, chard, and other greens, turnips, seed potatoes, and flowers like calendula, alyssum, snapdragon, and poppies. It's a busy month, with removing the last of the heat-loving plants, cleaning up the garden, adding compost, and replanting with cool-season crops. Make sure you monitor irrigation for your new seedlings, as we may still have plenty of warm days and no rain.

Maintaining: Pay attention to all new transplants, ornamental or edible. In the vegetable garden, aphids and white flies may still be active, and earwigs will be emerging from summer siesta. Continue with ant baits. Newly transplanted trees and perennials need to be monitored for soil moisture.

September is a good clean-up month, especially if you don't trim and prune year-round. Remove tired, dying summer edible garden plants. Don't add any plants to the compost bin that have diseases or pests unless your compost will heat up to at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Trim and prune shrubs, evergreen trees, and perennials, except for late summer/fall bloomers. Trim and divide bulbs, corms, and tubers if you haven't yet. They need to be replanted by Thanksgiving. Dispose of any remaining overripe or shriveled fruit and nuts on trees or on the ground.

You can apply pre-emergent herbicide for cool-season weeds starting this month. Remember: pre-emergent herbicide must be watered in well to activate it. Watch for bluegrass, brome, and other non-native weedy grasses to emerge, and use a hoe or hand pull to reduce their numbers.

Compost can be top-dressed in all beds. Compost is not a fertilizer, but it will help create and maintain healthy soil.

Check the soil moisture with a monitor or your hand to adjust watering as the weather changes. Heat waves may occur, so be ready to pre-irrigate as needed to keep plants stress-free. The wind is desiccating, too, so pre-irrigate if windy days are forecast.

Conserving: While you're trimming and slashing your way through the garden, keep an eye out for wildlife you want to conserve. Lizards, spiders, toads, butterflies, and moths are still active, and all of them have a place in the well-managed garden. Consider building rain basins and swales to keep rainwater on your property. Water from a rain basin should percolate in a week or less. If you connect your storm gutters to the rain basin, consider where the overflow will run, and make sure it's not to your door! The point is to have as much water as possible percolate and be stored deep in the soil, but in a small yard, you may still need to make use of municipal stormwater drain systems (aka gutters).

Other conservation chores this month: Keep the bird baths full. Remove tropical non-native milkweeds (orange/yellow flowers) and replace them with a native California species. Consider replacing a few more high-water-use ornamental plants with those that thrive on less water and that support native insects and birds. Planting species that are adapted to our climate is the path to a resilient California garden. We can all enjoy exotic plants, too, including our vegetable gardens and orchards, but having a foundation of climate-adapted plants means less time and money spent on chemicals and maintenance. Happy September Gardening!

The Tulare-Kings Counties Master Gardeners will answer your questions in person:

Visalia Farmer's Market, 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 8 - 11 am, Tulare Co. Courthouse

Sept. 12, 10 am - 2 pm, Luis Nursery Plant Clinic, Visalia

Questions? Call the Master Gardeners:

Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30;

Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m

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