

Garden Tasks as the Summer Winds Down

Vegetable Gardens: If you haven't got your fall vegetables in the ground yet, you still have time. I put some potted kale and spinach in the ground this week. Lettuce, kohlrabi, and chard can be planted also. These plants will provide you with greens into November and possibly beyond.

Continue to harvest those delicious tomatoes and peppers out of your garden.

Watch those watermelons and cantaloupes ripen and get them before the groundhogs or other critters eat them first.

So how do you know when your watermelons are ripe? If you trust the "thump" test, the lower the pitch of the thump, the riper the melon. The ground spot method says to look at the circle where the melon is resting on the ground. If the spot is yellow, the melon is ripe. Also, if the vine leading to the melon is brown, it's probably ripe.

If you want to put a cover crop on your garden, now is a good time to plan and purchase the seed. At one of our local Master Gardener project gardens, we will be spreading crimson clover seed (not red clover) in our vegetable gardens near the end of this month. Crimson clover is different than the clover we see in our yards and pastures and it is important to know the difference. Crimson clover is an annual and will die back in the spring, making it a good cover crop.

Flower Beds: September is also a good time to divide perennials such as peonies, hibiscus, and echinacea. Make sure you use some transplant fertilizer to help ensure survival of your new plantings. If you want some color in your garden over the winter, plant some violas or pansies this month.

Yard Maintenance: This month is a good time to start fall lawn maintenance. If you fertilize your lawn, UT research recommends soil testing and application of fertilizer in September, October, and November (<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/PB1576.pdf>). Soil testing ensures that you are adding the correct amount of fertilizer for the soil conditions in your yard. Soil sample kits are available from the UT Extension office for your county. Your local extension agent can also help you calculate how much fertilizer to apply based on the results of the soil test.

Also, de-thatching and aeration of your lawn can be done this month.

Resist the urge to prune trees this month and in the fall. This may encourage new growth that will be killed by the October frost and the wound will not have time to heal completely through the winter months.

Fall is a good time to plant trees. The warm September and October soil will get them started, if planted correctly. Be sure to follow the planting directions provided by the greenhouse.

That should be enough to keep you busy for the rest of the month! Happy gardening!