

Let's Talk Gardening

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Tom Harris, Ph. D.

The Country Gardener

More September Gardening Stuff to Do

Be sure to continue feeding your patio and containerized plants during this period. Use either Hasta Gro or Peters 20-20-20. Keep the soil moist, but not sopping wet.

If your roses haven't started blooming yet, there's still time to prune them lightly and fertilize them with rose food. Don't use too much food, though. Just follow the directions on the bag.

You can divide perennials like daylily and iris now. Dig them up. Split up the bulbs or rhizomes (large underground roots). Give half of them to your neighbors and friends. Add some compost and fertilizer to the bed. Replant them at the same depth they were. Mulch the daylilies, but not the irises.

Picking flowers encourages the plants to put on more flowers. Really! Yes, it does. I don't lie.

Pecan trees need lots of water right now—they need at least one inch of water over the entire root zone per week. Otherwise the nuts won't be full and delicious.

If you plan to plant some trees now, be sure to check out the tree's requirements before you plant. How big is it gonna get? Don't plant the tree any closer than 25 feet to any structure, sidewalk, or driveway. Dig the hole 2-3 times wider than the pot the tree is in but not any deeper. Add a little compost (no more than 10 percent) to the soil and plant the tree. Add some root stimulator, either liquid or powder (rock phosphate). Add mulch on top to keep the grass away. Water it once per week (enough to fill the hole you dug) until winter.

You can probably turn off the lawn sprinkler system. We're getting enough rain now to sustain almost any yard—with the exception MAYBE of St. Augustine. It still needs about a half-inch of water per week. If you have an in-ground system with spraying heads, that means that you only need to have it on ONE DAY per week for maybe 5-6 minutes, each station. That's enough. Really! Like I said, I don't lie about this stuff and I'm not making it up. I know some people who have their sprinkler system turned on so that it comes on every day for just a little while; I know some others who have theirs come on 3 or more days per week. What this does, folks, is encourage the roots of the grass and other plants to stay close to the top of the soil because they don't have to go any deeper to get a drink. Then, when the first adverse weather condition comes along, the roots can't handle it. If you would water only once per week or (Heaven forbid) maybe even every 10 days, then the water would go deeper and the roots would grow deeper to get to it. That makes for a healthy root system and, therefore, healthier plants...plants which can handle adverse weather conditions. Cooler weather is coming, so help your plants get ready.

Be sure to keep the grass mowed so that you don't have to remove more than about one-third of the blade when you cut it. And, wait until the grass is dry before you mow it; it'll keep it from clumping up and help keep the bottom of the lawn mower clean. Did I tell you that you need to keep the blade sharp? Huh? Did I? Huh? How many times have I told you that? (now I sounding like your Mom).

This is a good month to plant Bermuda grass or buffalo grass seed, or sod the lawn in to get it established before winter sets in. Be sure to keep it moist by watering twice per day for about 10 days or until the grass sprouts. Then back off on the watering to maybe once per week if it doesn't rain.

If you have tomatoes in the ground and they have little fruits about the size of your thumb, fertilize them with a slow-release lawn fertilizer...chemical (19-5-9) about 1 cup per 10 feet of row, organic (7-2-2) 2 cups per 10 feet of row. That equates to about one-fourth to one-third of a cup per plant. Place it in a circle around the plant about six inches away and water it in real good.

You can set out the cole crops (broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower) now if you have the little plants to do it with. It's a little late for seeds. Don't put lettuce, spinach or mustard out yet...it's not cool enough.

Send your comments and/or questions to gardener@gvtc.com.