

Let's Talk Gardening

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The Country Gardener

Fall is Tree/Shrub Planting Time

Just in case you missed it, lemme say again, now is absolutely the best time to plant trees and shrubs. Also, just as a reminder, be sure to dig the hole for the new tree about 2-3 times wider than the pot it came in but no deeper. If you plant a container-grown bush or tree deeper than it was in the pot—just because you think you oughta—think again. What you'll do is smother the new plant if you pile soil up around the trunk. Mix a little compost (about ten percent) in with the soil before you put it back in the hole. (By the way, for you math buffs, how much dirt would there be in a hole 12"x12"x12"? See answer below.) The idea is to get the new plant to grow in the medium in which it will live the rest of its life. Add a little liquid root stimulator to the hole and then water it in real good as you fill the hole...meaning that the dirt—I mean soil is level with the top of the ground. Put about 3-4 inches of mulch around the tree out to about 3 feet away from the tree. Be sure to leave a little space around the trunk so that the mulch doesn't touch the bark. Now, all you have to do is see to it that the soil doesn't dry out for the next several weeks. That may mean watering every 2-3 weeks. If the soil is dry down to the second joint of your index finger, put enough water down to fill the original hole.

Hey, it's time for your trees to start dropping their leaves if they haven't started already. It's FALL. Does that mean anything to you? Fall? Leaves fall. Fall. Get it? Don't worry that your trees are starting to look bare. It's what they're supposed to do in the FALL.

Your broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage and other cole crops should be making pretty good heads by now. Remember that these plants are heavy feeders and need quite a bit of fertilizer to make great, big ol' heads. Fall tomatoes should start turning color now. I've been picking them for a week or so and man, are they good. Oh, if you'd like some really hot little red peppers (chili petines), just let me know and I'll tell you how to get to my house and you can pick about a gallon or so off the bush I have. But be warned, they are little pellets from hell made by Lucifer himself. Personally I don't eat them, but if you like hot stuff, c'mon down and get ya some.

If your lawn is starting to have some brown circles in it, you've probably got brown patch—a fungal disease usually caused by too much water. Many times it indicates a low spot in the yard where water tends to stand longer than other areas. Brown patch can be treated with a good fungicide. Usually it takes 3-4 treatments about 7-10 days apart. Be sure to follow the directions on the label. More is not necessarily better and is wasteful. The cure for brown patch is to bring the low spot up level with the surrounding yard. You do this by adding one-half inch or so of top dressing or a sand-compost mixture. Wait until the grass comes up through this dressing and then do it again. In a few weeks, or maybe a couple of months, it should be level and not hold water.

If winter weeds are a problem in your yard, there is still time to apply a winter pre-emergent herbicide. What it does is keeps the weed seeds from germinating in the first place. Remember, though, that it only kills winter weeds. You need to do it again in the spring with the proper herbicide.

Now is also the time to dig up the iris, day lilies, Shasta daisies and other bulb-type perennials and divide them. Replant those that you want and give the rest to the neighbors. Be sure to leave part of the rhizomes of the irises showing above the ground so that they don't rot.

If you want bulbs for next spring, now is the time to go get 'em. They're in the nurseries right now but you have to hurry to get the best selection. They tend to go pretty fast. Generally speaking, we plant bulbs no more than four times the greatest dimension of the bulb; i.e., if the bulb is 1 inch tall, it should be planted 3-4 inches deep...pointed end UP in case you didn't know.

Answer to question in paragraph 1 above: none. There's no dirt in the hole. It's in a pile someplace else, isn't it? Duh!

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