

Bell County Master Gardener
Tip of the Week
By Mary Lew Quesinberry
“November Garden Chores”

Now is the time to plant cool season annuals such as calendula, dianthus, Johnny-jump-up, ornamental kale or cabbage, pansies, petunias, snapdragons, stock, and sweet alyssum. These cool season plants do best when planted in soil enriched with composted manure or other composted matter; fertilize them with a high nitrogen, slow release fertilizer, mulch and keep watered during dry periods.

Clean your houseplants that have summered outside and check them for critters and insects before moving back into the house or garage.

Use your lawn blower to force fallen leaves onto your lawn and then mulch them with your lawnmower. This is a wonderful source of nutrients for your lawn and it protects our landfills.

Add an Oak Wilt resistant tree to your landscape as a specimen plant or plant several as a screen. Desirable oak trees for Central Texas are Chinquapin (*Quercus muehlenbergii*), Bur (*Quercus macrocarpa*), Lacy (*Quercus laceyi*), and Monterrey/Mexican (*Quercus polymorpha*).

If you didn't sow your Blue Bonnet seeds last summer, you can buy transplants and set them out now.

Chill your spring flowering bulbs for six weeks in the refrigerator, but remember to keep them away from fruits since fruit-produced ethylene gas can prevent blooming! Daffodil, crocus, tulip, hyacinth can be planted in late December to early January. Some suppliers sell pre-chilled bulbs. Always buy number 1-size bulbs.

Apply mulch where needed to protect your plants against weather extremes, weeds, and to reduce moisture loss.

Wait until January/ February to cut back your frost damaged perennials.

Continue to provide water to your lawn, shrubs and flowerbeds. They will require at least 1 inch per month during the cold months. Plants in dry, stressed conditions are more likely to die from freezing weather. New additions to your landscape should be kept moist for the first year to help them get established. Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

In the photo: Ornamental Cabbage thrives in cool weather. Ornamental Kale has fancier leaf structures and greater color variety. Kales and Cabbages add interesting structure and color to the winter garden. Plant with other cool season annuals such as snapdragons, dianthus or petunias to give your garden color through the winter.

