



Henderson County Master Gardeners

Weekly News Article

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Time to Tidy the Garden

by Lydia Holley

“The times they are a changing”, sang Bob Dylan. And it is true. Autumn is creeping in. With the arrival of cooler, rainier weather, the garden changes, too. It is time for you to tidy the garden.

Give your garden beds a good weeding, and remove any spent daylily stalks. Just twist and pull, and they should release easily. If they do not release easily, you can cut the stalks off close to the base. The stalks of true lilies, however, need to remain until they are completely brown. The bulbs gather energy for next year’s blooms, so you do not want to cut these stalks off while they are still green.



Autumn is the right time to add most spring blooming bulbs. Order those now and they will be delivered at the proper planting time. Of course, you can also wait until they are available for purchase locally. Many bulbs can be directly planted into the ground, but tulips should be pre-chilled.

Formal hedges can be given a maintenance shearing. If you have planted shrubs that do not grow too fast, your hedges should only need shearing twice a year. Many feel that formal hedges are a lot of work, but they are not if you have chosen the proper shrub for the job.

Roses should have already been pruned lightly for a good fall flush. If you have not given your roses their summer pruning, it is not too late, provided you do not cut off too much. As roses bloom approximately six weeks after trimming, your flush may be delayed, but you should still get a stunning display before frosty weather arrives.

In East Texas, autumn is a great time to plant shrubs. This gives them time to grow roots before the hot, dry weather of summer arrives. Grasses are just beginning to show off their beautiful plumes. You may wish to consider adding several to your own garden.

Autumn is a great time to divide spring blooming plants. If it blooms in late summer or autumn, it is usually best to wait until spring to make your divisions.

Do you desire wildflower blooms in your garden? Many wildflower seeds can be scattered in autumn. Try scattering seeds of poppies (*Papaver*), milkweeds (*Asclepias*), coneflowers (*Echinacea*), and black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia*).

Now is a great time to get a soil test. You can contact the County Extension Office at the number listed below for a soil test kit. There is a small fee. However, finding out precisely what your soil may be missing is well worth the charge.

Autumn is also a great time to spread compost. Add it before you mulch your beds, which is another chore you can do now. If you do not have compost to spread, consider adding some compost bins to your garden. It is satisfying to throw waste into a bin and have it come out as “gardener’s gold” after some time has elapsed.

Interested in a fall vegetable garden? You can plant beans and cucumbers now; broccoli plants, English peas, and Irish potatoes around the middle of September; and cabbage plants, carrots, leaf lettuce, radishes, spinach and onion plants the first part of October.

There is one more thing you should do now: attend the free HCMGA Fall Conference on pollinators, Thursday, September 8, 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Senior Citizens Center, 3344 Hwy 31E, Athens.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com or visit www.henderson-co-tx-mg.org.