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**SEPTEMBER GARDEN CHECKLIST**

**By Kitty Angell**

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Benny Simpson, the late Research scientist from Texas A&M Research and Extension Center, Dallas, said “The one thing Texas will never have enough of is water; but Texas will always have plenty of extreme weather.” The gardeners and the farmers were certainly reminded of that fact this summer. It made us sad to see the pathetic corn and cotton crops plowed under because they just didn’t get enough rain at the right time.

More experienced gardeners have learned to work with native plants and also plants that have been tested for drought-tolerance and genetic resistance to insect and disease problems. We all live with Mesquite, Live Oak and Retama in this area, but there are some other trees to try for variety’s sake.

First and foremost is the Chinese Pistache, a great shade tree for Texas. It was the first shade tree to receive the coveted “Earth-Kind” designation. It is also a Texas SuperStar™, which means it has met all the grueling requirements for superior growing. Another plus is that it has spectacular fall color and is an extremely tough, durable and adaptable medium-size tree. It is fine on the Gulf Coast but does not do well in the Rio Grande Valley. It is a rather slow growing tree and looks awkward as an adolescent, needing some pruning to help shape it. At maturity, it reaches 40-50 feet and is magnificent with its brilliant red color in the fall, something we don’t see that much in the coastal bend.

Other good trees to try are the Bur Oak, Cedar Elm, and Montezuma Cypress. The latter of these is the southern sister species of the bald Cypress, only this evergreen conifer is more drought tolerant. It is remarkably free from insects and fungal problems and grows to a mature height of 30-40 feet. One downside is that a young Montezuma Cypress must be protected from deer. Check with Corpus Christi nurseries if you don’t find Chinese Pistache and Montezuma Cypress in local nurseries.

My reason for discussing trees is that it is better to plant trees and shrubs in the fall. Fall planting gives trees and shrubs several months of cooler weather to establish strong root systems that will enable them to withstand extreme hot temperatures like we have experienced this year. However, “location, location, location” is everything when it comes to trees and shrubs. If your new landscape plant doesn’t like wet or shade, don’t give it wet or shade. If it’s unhappy with dry and sunny, just say ‘no’ to dry and sunny.

Labor Day is a reminder that it is time to fertilize your lawn. Many people forget that dandelions and other weeds germinate in the fall, thus requiring two applications of pre-emergent herbicides a year.

Ornamental grasses are sometimes forgotten plants throughout the growing season. In the late summer and autumn they become stars! From the whimsical beauty of Gulf Muhly to the soft plumes of Fountain Grass to the graceful arching of Inland Seaoats, ornamental grasses add texture and depth to a well-planned landscape. Although most ornamental grasses (except for the small Mexican Feathergrass and Purple Threeawn) are meant for large yards or even acreage, with thought for mature size in mind, they can be placed strategically for stunning results. They also provide food for butterflies, food and nesting for hummingbirds, and food, cover, and nesting for other species of birds.

In the vegetable garden, snap beans planted in the fall have a sweeter flavor than ones planted in spring because they mature when the temperatures are cool. Besides snap beans, plant bush beans, lima beans, broccoli, cauliflower, mustard green, cabbage and radish. In late September, plant beets, Swiss chard, Chinese cabbage, collards, and sugar snap peas. Remember to intersperse your vegetables with herbs like cilantro, dill, and parsley.

Give your annual and perennial flower beds rejuvenation before adding new plantings. Cover the beds with 4 inch to 8 inch depths of compost and apply a 100% organic fertilizer at the rate of 10-20 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft. Till or hand turn these amendments into the soil. If you are adding to an existing perennial bed, use the lower recommendations and work into the areas with a cultivator. Be sure not to damage the roots of existing plants.

Continue a disease-spray schedule on roses. Black spot and mildew can be extremely damaging in September and October. Fungicide, used every 7-14 days, gives excellent control.

In late September, plant flowers from seed or plants like cornflower, delphinium, larkspur, lobelia, petunia, snapdragon, and stock. Divide and transplant (or share with a friend) spring-blooming perennials such as gaillardias, day lilies, Shasta daisy, violets, wood ferns, cannas, amaryllis, and iris. Continue to give established crinums plenty of water and organic fertilizer at this time to encourage repeat flowering.

The Master Gardeners will have some economical, healthy plants, adapted to our area, available at their fall plant sale on Saturday, September 29th, from 9AM to 1PM at the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, 892 Airport Road, Rockport.

*Texas AgriLife Extension Service - Aransas County Office is located at 892 Airport Road in Rockport. AgriLife Extension education programs serve people of all ages, regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, handicap or national origin.*