

Bell County Master Gardeners
Tip of the Week
BY Candy Mullen
“Plan and Plant Fall Gardens”

This summer has been truly beastly for gardeners. It seemed as if whatever one did to grow something, failed. Watering became a chore and not a pleasure, and thriving gardens were nonexistent. The welcome September rains came as a great relief to all.

For those of you who were frustrated this summer and think the season of growing things is over, think again. Actually, now is the time to plan and plant that fall garden. Cool season vegetables are a wonderful crop to get in the ground now as well as permanent plantings such as trees, roses, bushes and various native perennials.

Planting your selected trees now will encourage root growth and settling so your trees will be well established to survive another hot summer. Bushes, Texas superstar roses, and antique roses also need to establish good root systems through the winter to get an advance on summer stresses. You might also want to consider some fruit trees for fall planting. There are many varieties available for either permanent beds or dwarf patio varieties. Consider the luxuries of dwarf blueberries, lemons, oranges, apples, or figs right on your deck this coming season!

Do you like the wildflowers that abound in the spring? Those carpets of bluebonnets, paintbrush, Mexican hats, and primroses that are so prevalent actually get their start in the fall. Now is the time to establish a wildflower bed, prepare the soil, and plant the seeds if you want to attract butterflies and other critters to your yard.

Of course the vegetable gardener is not left out of the fall action either. Do you have visions of wonderful broccoli, cauliflower, kale or spinach gracing your table? Now is the time to look for varieties of leaf lettuce, Swiss chard (bright lights), kale (lacinata), Brussels sprouts, romaine lettuce, bok choy, curly endive, radishes, small carrots (Thumbelina), and beets (Bull's Blood). These provide not only nutrition but beautiful fall color to your garden and table also!

The one thing to remember if you plant in the fall is that watering all plantings is necessary, especially if we don't get the consistent rainfall necessary. So plan to water through out the fall and winter to establish your fall plantings to survive the summer. Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com