



## September Tips



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September weather is becoming milder which will make garden tasks more fun and pleasant. The soil and air temperatures are still warm but not overly hot. If you plan ahead for fall color, mums (garden chrysanthemums) and asters should be available at some garden centers this month. These young plants are usually not yet blooming, but if you buy them now they will be well acclimated to your space before the show begins. This month also marks the time to plant fall-blooming bulbs like autumn crocuses, saffron crocuses, and autumn daffodils. In some areas they make dramatic winter houseplants.

Fresh summer produce and flowers are still going strong, although produce seems to be slowing down. The garden tasks center on cleaning up, pulling weeds and starting the new fall/winter garden, whether it be planting or planning. Seeds and transplants of cool-weather hardy plants can be planted now for a winter show or harvests from fall through early spring. You should plant seeds and bulbs now for spring blooms and crops. Adding soil amendments, mulch, or other organic matter will improve soil structure and add some nutrients back into the soil for the next year's garden.

Fall is a good time to begin planning future landscape and garden projects and plantings. There are plenty of places to get great gardening ideas for future projects and plantings. Visit botanic gardens along with their greenhouses and garden centers. Most will have desert or cactus rooms filled with cacti and succulents that love the heat. These are great places to get ideas for balcony or patio plantings that thrive on sun and neglect. Of the thousands of varieties of annuals, several have particular appeal. There are always sunflowers, morning glories, moon vines, nicotiana (especially for that lovely evening fragrance), *Verbena bonariensis* (a butterfly magnet), petunias, coleus, impatiens, and others. However, if you have never grown zinnias now is a good time to plan and look at the many colors available for the coming season. Going to garden centers and also looking in seed catalogs is a good choice for finding new colors and species.

## September Tips(cont.)

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### Vegetables, Fruits and Herbs

Sow beets, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chard, chervil, chives, collards, endive, garlic, [kale](#), kohlrabi, leeks, lettuce (this is the best time for sowing the heading types), green onions, short-day bulb onions, parsley, parsnips, peas, white potatoes, radishes, spinach, and turnips.

Sow or transplant two or three times the amount you would for spring harvest, since these over wintering crops will grow more slowly in the cooler months than during the warmer months.

Many herbs have the tendency to re-seed themselves. You can take advantage of this and transplant the new seedlings to a new location and keep the herbs of your choice going until springtime. Sow some frost-tender herbs for fresh use indoors for winter use.

Many herbs make attractive edible house plants. The dark green basil, chervil, chives, dill, mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary, summer savory, sweet marjoram, and thyme.

Keep the seedbeds moist and shaded from the hot sun in the afternoon. When the seedlings develop two to four leaves you can transplant them to their permanent place and mulch them.

Pinch out the growing tips of melons and squashes and indeterminate tomatoes to force growth into the fruits that have already set. If the fruits set too late they won't have a chance to ripen completely before the cooler temperatures arrive.

### Trees

Fall is an excellent time to plant woody plants. Plant new trees while the soil is still warm to let the roots get established before the soil temperature gets too cold for root growth. Decide what you want from a tree, where it will be planted (plan for long term, root growth and habit along with the shape and growing height), and for what purpose. If you want summer shade for the house, a deciduous tree planted on the south side would be appropriate. If you prefer a pleasant window view, a grouping might be nice.

Trim off dead wood, watersprouts, and suckers of established trees. Leave the major pruning for January when the trees are dormant. Shape evergreen hedges for the last time this year.

Feed citrus and avocado trees and all other fruit trees, this will help them harden off for the winter. Next feeding should be in February or March.

Fall colors come alive with many trees, including beech, birch, coral tree, fruitless mulberry, ginkgo, [koelrueteria \(golden rain tree or Chinese flame tree\)](#), liquidambar, [low chill apple](#), magnolia, maidenhair, Japanese and other maples, crape myrtles, persimmon, [purple orchid tree](#), Chinese pistache, sour gum, Chinese tallow, and zelkova.

### Ornamentals

Sow or transplant ageratums, alyssums, [asters](#), astilbes, baby blue eyes, baby's breath (gypsophilia), bachelor's buttons (cornflower), begonias, calendulas (winter or pot marigolds), campanulas, (bellflower, Canterbury bells), candytufts, carnations (dianthus, sweet williams), [chysanthemums](#), clarkias (godetia), columbines (aquilegia), coralbells (heuchera), coreopsis (pot of gold, calliopsis), gloriosa daisy (rudbeckia, black-eyed-susan, coneflower), Shasta daisy, English daisy (bellis), delphiniums, forget-me-nots (myosotis), foxgloves, gaillardias (blanket flower), gerberas (Transvaal daisy), geums, hollyhocks, impatiens, larkspur, linarias, lobelias, lunarias (honesty, silver dollar plant, money plant), nemesias, nigellas (love-in-a-mist, Persian jewel), [pansies](#), penstemons (bearded tongue), phloxes, Iceland, Oriental, and California poppies, primroses (primula), salvias, [snapdragons](#), statice (limonium, sea lavender), stocks, sweet peas, verbena, and [violas](#).

## September Tips(cont.)

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If you are interested in the more natural look there are several companies that offer a wide variety of California wildflowers that are grouped by color or geographic areas and are drought resistant. Of course these flowers don't have a groomed look, but are beautiful non-the-less.

### Bulbs

Along with clear blue skies and cooling temperatures, September brings spring planning time. Reluctant to admit that summer is over, daylight is decreasing and fall is approaching, but we must get prepared or suffer the consequences. Maybe you had no [bulbs](#) planted at all but would like to give it a try this year. There are some easy bulbs that can be planted that will reward you year after year. Bulbs that bloom the earliest the most can be planted near the front or back door or on the nearby path where they can be seen early in the season. Flowers look best in groups of at least 4 to 5 bulbs, planted 3 to 4 inches deep, 2 to 3 inches apart. Left undisturbed, these will die back naturally and multiply by themselves. Other early bloomers are the crocus and chionodoxia also called glory of the snow. Chionodoxia produce sprays of 5-10 star shaped flowers in blue, pink and white. They are quite tiny and can be placed anywhere. Crocus are reliable bloomers in a host of colors. Another favorite is the grape hyacinth or muscari which comes in blue and white. These should be grouped together for the best effect. All of these multiply naturally and can be enjoyed for years.

Daffodils are wonderful permanent additions to the garden. They will re-bloom and multiply if their foliage is allowed to die naturally to rejuvenate the bulb. With care in ordering, you can have daffodils from early to late spring of all types, from the miniatures such as Golden Bells or the familiar large King Alfred. There are pure white, white with pink cups, yellow with orange cups, and ruffled daffodils. Some are beautifully scented making your spring bouquet even more desirable. Also, traditional paper-white narcissus are a dependable spring bulb in southern California. Try planting daffodils among day lilies. As the daffodils finish, the day lilies begin to grow and mask the dying foliage of the daffodils. Creating a continuous pleasure to the eye and a great addition to the garden show.

Tulips, of course, are always associated with spring and you can plan to have a succession of blooms from early to late spring. Dig your tulips deeply according to directions. For the best effect, plant them in groupings of 3, 5, 7 or more. Tulips that are planted in a straight line are like a line of isolated soldiers and don't add anything to the overall color effect of the garden. There are double tulips, single large Darwin tulips, lily flowering tulips, species tulips, parrot tulips, and ruffled tulips. Greigii tulip, commonly called Red Riding Hood, blooms in early to midseason. Another tulip is Angelique, a pink ruffled tulip that is a semi-double that bears 2-3 blooms on each stem. Another type of tulip is Tubergen's Gem. The outer petals are brick red, the inner yellow and blooms midseason.

These are just few suggestions. There are other wonderful bulbs such as hyacinths, they come in pink, blue, white, and have a fragrant smell. Another small bulb is the anemone which comes in blue and white and has daisy like blooms. These are charming when planted in masses in garden border areas. You can get information on bulbs from your local garden center and catalogs. Today's gardener has many choices and colors on their palette. Use them creatively and remember to take pictures to enjoy your creativity!!! The pictures can also be used to plan for next years garden and make changes or additions, great for record keeping.

### General

Replenish your compost pile if you have one. Put spent annuals, vegetables, light weeds (without seed pods), along with grass and other garden clippings, and non greasy trimmings from the kitchen. Don't add plants or plant clippings that are obviously infected with disease or insect pests. Just destroy and dispose of them. When filling or adding to the compost pile, chop up bulky items to help them decompose faster. Don't add branches or thick stems; they take a very long time to break down and tie up the progress of the pile. Layer fresh green material in the compost pile with a bit of soil and dry matter. Keep the pile moist but not overly wet. Turn the pile about once a week to keep it aerated.

Hose off plant foliage, both top and bottom of the leaf surface, to remove dust and dirt from the plant and to lessen populations of insects such as aphids, caterpillars, mealy bugs, spider mites, and white flies. It is best to do this early in the day.

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