

September 6, 2017



PUTTING YOUR GARDEN TO BED

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It is tempting to turn our back in the garden at the end of the long, hot summer once we harvest those last vegetables and cut back the perennials. But “putting the garden to bed” properly in the fall will make it oh-so-much easier later. As winter moves to spring, we can look forward to planting in healthy, weed-free beds.

It’s wonderful to get out into the just-a-hint-of-fall morning air and clean up our garden spaces, raking away dead leaves and old mulch to eliminate the possibility of disease. Pull out dead tomatoes - the roots of which can harbor hornworm. Put all the Himalayan blackberry shoots which slithered into the perennials, the mint from under the rhododendrons, and the dandelions and other weeds into the burnpile. Weed seeds may survive a marginally “hot” compost pile and go right back into a composted spring garden! Ditto for leaves contaminated with powdery mildew spores.

Let’s think “happy recycling” and pull those old hollyhocks and other butterfly delights and either shake the seeds back into the ground or save them in paper for re-sowing. As we prune perennials back, how about starting some cuttings for new plants? Consider cover crops, planted for erosion control on slopes and to increase nitrogen for soil health are super-easy to grow from seed.

Divide and replant perennials, and transplant cool-weather annuals like violas, pansies, primroses, calendulas, cyclamen, stock, and snapdragons. Transplant shock can be mitigated and new root growth stimulated by drenching young plants with a water-soluble mycorrhizal fungi mixture. This is also the very best season for planting/transplanting vegetables and ornamentals. September is the month to transplant cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and kale and to direct-seed beets, bok choy, spinach, lettuce, peas, radishes, carrots, chard, parsley and cilantro. Sow seeds for columbine, lupine, and California poppy.

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Take a half-day excursion to a favorite nursery and see what “fall color” we can plant now. Perhaps a Chinese pistache, red maple, or liquidamber - all spectacular choices for high value trees in the garden.

As we are completing fall chores, let’s consider our successes and those “not-so-much.” It’s the season for “tough love” - remove plants and trees that are just too fragile for clay soil or drought, in the wrong location, or that fail to thrive. My example: a once beautifully-shaped viburnum “tree” which wilts every three days. Perhaps a gopher tunneled in to feast on its roots, or it needed to be a bit more protected from heat or sun. Regarding this as a failed experiment and transplanting my divided penstemons into that space with a new trumpet vine for balance is a happier solution.

I don’t have enough space to share with you all the pleasures and rewards of fall season gardening chores, so I’ve attached our Master Gardener website of archived articles. Visit http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Articles/Archived_Articles/ or access mgeldorado.ucanr.edu and click on “Articles” in the left menu. You will find past articles on composting, seed saving, cover crops, propagation techniques, and so much more on “putting the garden to bed.”

The next Master Gardener public education class will be an all-day workshop covering the many parts of “Putting Your Garden to Bed.” Cheryl Turner and Cindy Young will discuss yard and garden cleanup, cool-season planting, tool sharpening/cleaning, composting/mulching, pruning, and more. Class will be 9am to 4pm at Folsom Lake College/Sherwood Demonstration Garden in Placerville. Class is free, on-campus parking is \$2.

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512). Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. You can also find us on Facebook.