

What The Garden Needs Now

Based on the Sunset Western Garden Book (published 2007) and various other sources, we'll be providing tips about what to do in your garden each month, planting, pruning, watering, fertilizing etc. We in the South Puget Sound area are mostly Zone 4

September

Plant

Divide your herbaceous perennials: These are garden plants with non-woody stems that die back to the soil line when winter temperatures arrive. The plants enter a dormant period and strengthen the root system waiting for spring (Pacific Coast Iris, Black Eyed Susan, Foxglove, Larkspur, Phlox).

Sink flower bulbs now for spring bloom. Most tulips and hyacinths are good for two or three years. For longer-lasting species, try daffodils, English or Spanish bluebells (*Hyacinthoides*), glory-of-the-snow (*Chionodoxa luciliae*), lilies, grape hyacinth (*Muscari*), ornamental onions (*Alliums*), and spring or summer snowflakes (*Leucojum*).

Order

The seed catalogues are starting to show up in the mailbox! What gorgeous bulbs and hardy plants might find their way to your house?

Wildflower mixes for fall planting. Most blend a few natives (California poppy and farewell-to-spring) with nonnatives that naturalize well (bachelor's button, Queen Anne's lace, and Shirley poppy).

Maintain

Net ponds now before autumn leaf fall gets underway

Let roses go to hips – their presence prepares the plants for winter dormancy.

Cooler weather and shorter days decrease the need for water. Be sure to reduce the frequency—but not the duration—of your irrigation.

Spray concrete paths and patios with a moss-prevention product so they don't become green and slick this winter.

Clean out cold frames and greenhouses

Fertilize

Perennial flowers and ornamental grasses one last time before they start to go dormant. Choose any balanced, organic product labeled for general garden use.

Fertilize the lawn grass with a fall and winter lawn food

Cover

Tender annual flowers and vegetables—such as ageratum, impatiens, marigolds, peppers, tomatoes, and zinnias—need cover whenever temperatures are forecast to dip below 40°. Use old sheets or commercial frost blankets.

October

Plant

You can start forcing bulbs like Hyacinth, Paperwhites and Amaryllis.

This is the ideal time to plant Clematis

Plant daffodil bulbs, tulip bulbs and allium bulbs for a glorious spring display. Dot them through borders or naturalize them in grass.

When your summer containers are looking past their best, re-plant them with fresh winter bedding plants

Invest in bird baths and bird feeders this autumn. Birds are a gardener's friend and keep pests down.

Order:

Look through those fun seed catalogues for unusual plants Spring bulbs

Order raspberry canes

Maintain

Throw weeds, spent flowers, and vegetable waste into a compost bin at least 3 feet wide and high. Turn and water the pile occasionally, and you'll have finished compost by spring.

Drain sprinkler systems and detach hoses from their bibs before hard freezes ice them up.

Put out suet for woodpeckers and chickadees, and hang hummingbird feeders to help Anna's hummingbirds make it through the winter.

Put the lawn to bed for winter by mowing and edging it one last time before midmonth, when growth virtually stops until March. Keep leaves raked.

Clean and winterize tools before you put them away, sharpening shovels, hoes, and mower blades; spraying moving parts with penetrating oil; and running the gas out of power equipment.

Lift Dahlia tubers, Begonia tubers and Gladioli corms to store dry over the winter months. Remove any dead foliage before storing them.

Clear overhanging plants from pathways to maintain access around the garden.

Cut back perennial plants that have died down. Alternatively leave the dead foliage in place to shelter friendly wildlife.

After tidying borders, mulch with bark chips, well rotted manure, leaf mold or spent mushroom compost to insulate plant roots for the winter and keep weed growth in check.

Fertilize

Rake any thatch from the lawn surface and repair dead patches. There's still time to lay fresh turf if required.

Gather any of those remaining tomatoes and ripen inside – use a shallow box, covered with newspaper and put an old banana in with the tomatoes to generate ethylene gas

November

Plant

Start forcing bulbs like Paperwhites, Amaryllis and Hyacinth for the holidays. You can still plant those tulips, daffodils and other early Spring bulbs to ensure beautiful results.

Fall is a great time to sow wildflower seeds in that out-of-the-way area of the yard where the hose does not reach. The seeds will not have to deal with a hot, pounding sun right away. When they do sprout in spring, there will be plenty of rain and moderate temperatures for them to thrive in, unaided.

Plant a container with pretty winter views in mind. Pansy, viola, flowering stock, ornamental cabbage, nemesia -- these and other annuals can dress a pot with color all winter long.

Try your hand at creating a container arrangement. Stuff a pot with clippings of evergreens, interesting twigs, berried branches, and rose-hipped stems. Add ornamental grasses, coneflower heads, and pinecones.

Order and Plan:

Have you thought about redesigning your garden space or moving a bed? Now's the time to get out there and lay out your plans, dig and move – before the ground freezes

Make homemade bird food and pinecone bird feeders – they are perfect to hang out for hungry feathered friends and so much fun to view while you're working in the garden or enjoying your yard from inside your house.

Welcome Birds: Make your yard a retreat for birds by providing food, water, and shelter this winter. You'll enjoy the flitting color, and some birds may settle in to call your yard home for every season. [Great holiday gifts for the bird-lover in your life](#)

- Clinging birds, like chickadees and nuthatches, will visit mesh feeders that lack perches.
- Goldfinches hang on thistle sock feeders.
- Woodpeckers and flickers cling to suet cages.
- Ground feeders, like juncos, pine siskins, and doves, favor a ground-level feeding tray.

Water: Add a heater to an existing birdbath or invest in a heated birdbath. Keep baths filled. Birds will come to depend on the fresh water source you provide. If you're adding a heated birdbath to a deck, look for a rail-mount bath that tilts for easy cleaning.

Birds will seek out winter shelter in dense evergreens, roosting pockets, and nest boxes. Clean birdhouses by removing old nesting material and wiping down surfaces with a 10 percent bleach solution. Wear rubber gloves when cleaning nest boxes.

Maintain

Keep working on cleaning up those flower beds – the dying leaves and fronds are getting quite slimy now due to light frost and rain. Put cuttings and leaves in your compost bin, add layers of leaves you've raked and keep turning to help it work.

Get that mulch on your beds – a 2" thick layer helps prevent weeds and soil erosion. Good examples of mulch ingredients are peat moss, bark, sawdust, and shredded newspapers. Both sawdust and bark leach nitrogen from the soil, therefore, steps must be taken to replenish this nitrogen before replanting. If you're mulching your vegetable garden and still have some winter crops in the ground, occasionally dig down through the mulching material and check to see that the soil has sufficient moisture.

Drain sprinkler systems and detach hoses from their bibs before hard freezes ice them up.

Clean Up Around Fruit Trees: If you have fruit that has fallen to the ground, remove and dispose of it; this will help prevent disease and pest issues. It's also a good idea to keep weeds and grasses around your trees at a minimum to prevent pest from making nests, so mow or weed as needed. Apply a layer of compost surrounding the orchard to replenish nutrients.

Protect young trees and shrubs in cold weather: There are a number of potential dangers including freezing winds, snow or ice damage, and rodents eating through the trunk or eating bark on other parts of the tree. Building a wind screen can help protect plants from the winter weather. To build a screen, install several tall stakes on the side of the tree that gets the brunt of the wind. Attach gardening burlap to the stakes. You can also cover trees with tree protection wraps or frost blankets if they are particularly sensitive or young. To protect against rodents, install tree guards.

Fertilize

November is the time to apply a second treatment of lawn fertilizer. Fertilizing your lawn in the fall is more important than any other time of the year. Setting your lawn up for good health during the coldest months of the year will ensure you have a lush, green lawn come spring and summer as well as reduce your maintenance requirements after the winter thaw

December

Plant

Flowering cabbage and kale in pots add unusual color to your deck.

Plant some herbs indoors in a sunny window to use and enjoy all winter

If you still have spring-blooming bulbs on hand, get them in the ground as soon as possible. Feel free to scoop up clearance bulbs. Compost any that are soft or dried up.

If you're planning to add a conifer to your garden, consider buying one now and using it as a live Christmas tree before planting it in the ground. Some attractive garden-scale options include alpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*), Austrian black pine (*Pinus nigra*), and Korean fir (*Abies koreana*). Keep indoors only one to two weeks and water regularly.

Winter camellias (mostly sasanquas and hiemalis) are in flower now in *Sunset* climate zones 4-9, 17. 'Yuletide' (red flowers and yellow centers) is among the most beautiful and reliable. For something unusual, try 'Baby Bear' dwarf camellia. Plants are very slow-growing, reaching about 3 feet in five years

Propagate evergreens. Start new camellia, daphne, mahonia, rhododendron, or rosemary plants from your existing shrubs. Peel a fingernail-size patch of bark from the bottom of a low-hanging branch, dust the wound with rooting hormone (available at garden centers), and press down until it touches the soil; secure it with a brick. The branch will root where it contacts the ground. After it's well rooted in a year or so, cut the branch free from the mother plant and transplant to another part of the garden.

Plant hardy tree and shrub varieties anytime. Water them well after planting and top them with a mulch of well-composted manure.

Care for houseplants. Lightly fertilize winter-flowering or winter-fruiting types (amaryllis, azaleas, Christmas and Thanksgiving cactus, hydrangeas, kalanchoes, mums, ornamental peppers, and poinsettias), but wait until spring growth begins before feeding foliage plants.

Order and Plan

Those tempting seed catalogues are coming in the mail – give a gift that lasts all year: Azalea, Christmas cactus, kalanchoe or a tabletop Christmas tree. Azaleas, Christmas cactus, kalanchoes, and orchids can live and bloom in containers for years if you provide bright light, frost protection, and regular applications of fertilizer (azaleas do best if placed outdoors in summer).

Maintain

Go on rodent patrol: It's prime season for pesky varmints to chew bark off trees and shrubs. Eliminate hiding places for rodents by removing weeds around woody landscape plants. Also, never pile mulch directly against a tree trunk or shrub base.

Keep compost going: Heavy winter rains can quickly drench compost, eliminating oxygen from the pile and making it stink. Slip a cover over your compost during winter's rainy season. Blanketing the top is fine.

Monitor water flow: During heavy rainfalls, observe water runoff patterns in your landscape. Address these issues next year with ditches or French drains. Or spend winter learning about rain gardens and bioswales -- and add one of these gardens to your yard.

Store tender roots: Before the month ends, examine roots, tubers, and corms you dug during fall. Compost any that are soft or moldy. On dahlias, cut out bad spots and dust the wound with sulfur. Remove these tubers from the others and store separately.

Stop hitchhikers: Reduce home insect invasions from firewood by bringing in only enough wood to burn for a day. Knock logs together or against the ground before bringing indoors to dislodge insects.

If a frost warning is issued, water plants before temperatures drop. Plants that are well-watered survive frost better. When frost comes without warning, watering afterwards helps plants survive. Irrigate after plants start to thaw.

When you're covering plants for the night, ensure your protective coverings touch the ground. Frost protection covers work by trapping radiant heat in soil. As soil releases its heat, the cover holds the heat around the plant. Use fabric covers, such as plant insulating blankets, burlap, or bed sheets. It's easy and quick to build a shelter around tender plants: anchor stakes in soil and attach a cover to stakes.

Prune for swags and boughs. Using sharp shears, cut winter greens, making each cut just beyond a side branch (don't leave stubs). Keep the plant's finished shape in mind as you work.

Chill paperwhites. When displayed in cool air (below 60° or so), the stems of these flowering bulbs do a good job supporting their blooms. But when you bring potted plants inside to enjoy their fragrance, the stems start flopping over. To prevent this, move the plants to a chilly porch or other cool, frost-free location whenever you leave the house for a few hours and before going to bed.

Sand icy walkways. Unlike salt, sand doesn't hurt plants when it washes onto their roots, so it's a good choice for concrete and asphalt paths and driveways. But don't use on tiles or wood decks, since it may scratch them; use a de-icing chemical instead (available at home improvement centers).

January

Plant

Plant vegetable seeds in your indoor greenhouse or protected plant rack.

Start Seeds Indoors -- Start seeds indoors if you like for warm-season annuals, such as tomatoes, marigolds, peppers, cosmos, zucchini, impatiens, salvia, basil, and others. Otherwise, wait until all chance of freezing temperatures has passed and buy established seedlings at the garden center.

Garden Journals -- If you haven't already, start a garden journal or file. Tuck into it names of plants you like, magazine pictures, plant labels and seeds, and anything else that suits your fancy. If you're feeling crafty, make your own journal

Order and Plan

Fireplace ashes can be saved to use as fertilizer for your Iris and other alkaline soil plants.

Order summer flowering bulbs, such as Gladioli, seeds or anything else your heart and garden desires

Maintain

Trim back Hellebore leaves, being careful of new growth. Make sure to check plants under eaves to ensure they're getting enough water.

Add a little compost and a thick layer of mulch to protect the tender new growth of bulbs. In the event of snow, shake or brush off branches of evergreens and shrubs, as it become wet and frozen the weight dramatically increases. Branches are more brittle when the plant is dormant and the snow or ice weight may snap them off.

If the ground is at all workable, now is an excellent time to turn the soil. Not only will this expose insect eggs to the effects of winter and hungry birds, the freezing will help to break apart heavy dirt clods

This is the time of year for dormant oil spraying. This is an effective, non-toxic (at least to humans, fish, birds and pets) method of dealing with certain insects and fungal diseases. You spray the oil-water mixture onto susceptible trees and plants (ie apples, cherries, hawthorns, roses) before they leaf out. The thin coating of oil smothers any over-wintering insect larvae, thus substantially reducing insect problems in the coming season. Sulphur is often added to the mix to kill fungal spores. The oil and pump sprayers are available at garden centers.

Houseplant Basics - Houseplant growth this month is slow, so don't fertilize and keep watering to a minimum.

Garden Projects - Now is an excellent time to start some of those garden hammer-and-nail projects you've been wanting to do -- window boxes, planters, arbors, and more.

February

Plant

Start cool-season veggies: seedlings of broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, herbs, onion-family members (including chives), and Swiss chard; roots of asparagus and rhubarb; seeds of peas, radishes, and leaf crops such as spinach and Asian greens; and potato tubers.

Sow seeds of warm-season edibles inside, such as cucumbers, eggplant, melons, peppers, squash, and tomatoes now so they'll be ready to plant out in May.

Plant romantic blooms like ranunculus. With luscious petals that look like layers of brightly pigmented tissue paper, the 4-inch-wide blooms sit atop sturdy stems and foliage. Treat like an annual and remove plants when blooms fade, typically as summer arrives.

As you may already have starts in seed boxes under lights, put together some herbs for your kitchen window to brighten up those late winter meals.

Plant some pansies – they're remarkably hardy and so cheerful, especially if there's snow!

President Washington's birthday (Feb 21) is the traditional time to plant peas – however if the soil is still too waterlogged and/or cold, wait a few more weeks.

Order and Plan

Bare root fruit trees, fruiting shrubs, vines and canes, onion plants, potato seeds, garlic and shallot seeds. Bare root items can be planted outside as long as the ground isn't frozen. If you aren't opposed to using plastic in the garden, pin black plastic down over your beds for extra heat and weed suppression. Clear plastic actually warms soil even better, but allows weeds to germinate like crazy. If you plan to leave plastic on your beds the whole season and just plant through it, make sure you have a soaker hose or something to irrigate under the plastic.

Maintain

As grass starts growing this month, fill in bare spots by roughing up the soil and sowing seed. If planting a new lawn, grow from seed or sod. Use a blend of perennial ryegrass and bent grass in sun, fescue in shade. East of the Cascades, try unthirsty buffalo grass in sunny spots.

This is the best time to divide summer- and fall-flowering perennials like asters, black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Chrysanthemums, purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), and Shasta daisies for zones 4-7. Wait until autumn to divide spring-flowering perennials.

Dig compost into your soil to prepare for the coming growing season.

Prune and fertilize rose bushes

Take advantage of those rare sunny days and get back outside and prune trees and shrubs, which are still dormant, and divide perennials

Cut back the stalks of ornamental grasses to within a few inches of the ground to make room for new growth.

If you have been storing bulbs, corms, or tubers, continue to check them to make sure that they are neither rotting nor totally drying out. Transfer tubers and corms into pots.

There's still time to handle dormant season pruning and spray fruit trees with dormant oil to control mites, scale and overwintering bugs.

March

Plant

If your soil is warmed up, and the danger of frosts have passed, you can start setting out early crops such as beans, sweet peas, early potatoes, onion sets, and rhubarb.

Plant your summer blooming bulbs. Be sure to add compost and some bone meal with each one. Use the summer bloomers to fill in anticipated gaps in your garden beds.

Grow camellias in *Sunset* climate zones 4–7. Some of the finest garden camellias are also some of the oldest. Try white 'Alba Plena' from 1792, a pink bloomer with white markings from 1831 called 'Elegans' (or *Chandleri Elegans*), the blush pink 'Magnoliiflora' from 1886, and an orangey rose-pink type called 'Kumasaka' that dates back to 1896

It's not too early to plant potatoes; they'll be ready to harvest in as little as 60 days.

Order and Plan

If any of your current plants will need support during the upcoming season, add trellises and supports now so the plants can utilize them as they grow.

Plant vegetables and blooms that you might wish to enter in the Thurston County Fair!

Take note (and photos) of where your spring bulbs are appearing – are they healthy? Do you like the locations they are in? This will help you remember in the fall when you're planting bulbs if you need to put them somewhere else or order new stock. Also note where in your yard you have a spot that would look great with bulbs – around the mailbox, base of trees, a stump, etc.

Maintain

As new shoots appear, scratch bulb fertilizer into soil around plants. This feeding ensures a strong show next year.

Begin Slug Patrol: As soon as bulbs begin to poke through soil, slugs start feeding. To get a jump on controlling these voracious chewers, put out slug bait when you see bulb

shoots. Slugs are most active during mild, rainy weather. You'll likely spot three types of slugs.

- European black slug: They are usually brown but occasionally black or white. This slug feeds on new growth and poses a large threat to garden plants.
- Banana slug: Most often yellow or black-spotted yellow, banana slugs can also be green or white. They feed on mushrooms, leaf litter, and dead plants. As a result, they pose no threat to the garden.
- Leopard slug: This slug is gray with black spots. It's omnivorous, eating garden plants but also feasting on insects and European black slugs.

Divide up and plant any perennials that have developed those bald spots in the middle. If it was too cold in February to prune your roses back, you should be able to accomplish this task this month. Afterwards, mulch and add some light fertilizer. Wait til autumn to divide spring-flowering perennials.

In general, this is a good time to feed woody plants with general purpose fertilizer. Your camellias and rhododendrons will also appreciate the appropriate feeding now, to encourage gorgeous blossoms in mid-to-late spring.

Keep feeding and providing water and shelter for your bird friends. You might also want to take feeders down and give them a good cleaning as spring arrives. Then refill with seed and keep enjoying the garden visitors! Clean out the bird bath as well.

Knowing when to prune your hydrangeas is critical to their blooms. If hydrangeas don't bloom for a season, it's usually due to one of three reasons: They didn't get enough sun, an early frost killed the buds, or they were pruned at the wrong time. How and when you prune Hydrangeas depends on which type of hydrangeas you have in your spring garden.

If you have a variety of hydrangeas that bloom on new wood, March is the perfect time to prune your hydrangeas in most parts of the country. New wood hydrangeas varieties include Limelights, Annabelle, Panicles, and Endless Summer. Prune these plants down to one to three feet above the ground and leave some older canes on the exterior of the plant to support new growth. Get ready to enjoy a bounty of hydrangea blooms this summer!

April

Plant

Plant seeds or seedlings of chives, garlic chives, and parsley right away, but wait until danger of frost is past to sow basil and cilantro. Plant lavender, marjoram, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage, tarragon, and thyme seedlings anytime.

Plant vegetables and blooms that you might wish to enter in the Thurston County Fair!

Now is the perfect time to give the garden a little color by planting annuals such as: Dusty Miller, Marigold, Pansy, Snapdragon, Sweet Alyssum, Sweet William.

Order and Plan

Top 15 Native Plants you might be interested in:

Goatsbeard
Alpine Strawberry
Broadleaf Lupine
Camassia
Blanket Flower
Lewisia
Satin Flower
Blue Columbine
Pacific Bleeding Heart
Shooting Star
Broadleaf Sedum
Oregon Grapeholly
Miniature Hollyhock
Fireweed
Tufted Hairgrass

Consider a lawn made of more than just grass. Early spring is a wonderful time to prepare your lawn for success later in the season. The negative space it creates offsets perennial beds. Every spring, take the time to manually aerate; consult a professional if you have a larger lawn. Overseed the lawn with a quality seed mix. Consider mixes which incorporate white English daisies (*Bellis perennis*, Zones 4–8), white yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*, Zones 3–9), and white alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*, annual) to create the look of a shaggy meadow full of flowers. After overseeding, rake a generous amount of fine compost over it and water it in. This ensures that the lawn will not only look great but also perform well in the summer.

Maintain

Keep up with your weeding, we all know how quickly weeds replace themselves when you're not looking.

Keep scrubbing off the green slime from decks and walkways.

Turn your compost.

Alkaline loving plants such as lilac, mock orange, deutzia and daphne need a shot of lime at this time. Just sprinkle garden lime in a circle around the base of these plants. If you want to change the color of your mophead hydrangeas from blue to pink, now is the time to apply lime to adjust the soil pH.

Lift and divide overgrown perennials

Clean up raspberries. If you enjoy growing your own raspberries (*Rubus idaeus*, Zones 4–8), now is a good time to get your fruiting canes ready to perform later in summer. In the beginning of April, go through your summer-fruiting raspberries and remove dead canes. If you have a larger bed or patch of raspberries, now is also a good time to tie them to one side and separate this year's fruiting canes from the new ones that will fruit next year. This simple method helps with your yearly cleanup. (Caution: This does not apply to fall-fruiting varieties. They are typically cut to the ground in late winter.) After the cleanup, spread all-purpose fertilizer; check the package for the recommended application amount. Also add a 2-to-3-inch coat of compost to the beds to prepare them for lots of fruit. There are also a few container-grown varieties of raspberry available at local nurseries and garden centers which are great for a gardener with limited space or who don't want to deal with the spread of rooting canes.

Because slugs and snails can decimate both newly emerging seedlings and tender transplants, take a proactive approach by setting beer baits or sprinkling diatomaceous earth around the delicate plants.

Prune boxwoods. Once the chance of frost has passed, it's a good time to trim up your boxwoods (*Buxus* spp. and cvs., Zones 4–9) before they start growing in earnest. Unfortunately, boxwood blight cases have started showing up in the Pacific Northwest, so take extra care and caution when doing your spring pruning. Put down a tarp to collect the clippings and to make cleanup easier. It's important to remove all the clippings from your garden beds to prevent and stop the spread of diseases. It's just as important to clean your tools. Keep a spray bottle of rubbing alcohol in the tool tub and clean clippers or shears between plants. If you have established boxwoods, only a minimal clipping is required. Just make sure to apply some all-purpose fertilizer and mulch afterward. Make sure your boxwoods get adequate water in the coming year, but beware of overhead watering or super-saturated soils; these have been noted to encourage boxwood blight. For more information on the disease, here is a great resource from Oregon State University Extension: [Beware of Boxwood Blight!](#)

May

Plant

Time to plant summer-blooming bulbs, corms, and tubers into soil now as it warms. This includes cannas, dahlias, gladiolus, and summer-flowering lilies.

Test Garden Tip: Insert stakes for dahlias and other bulbs at planting time to avoid spearing tubers by staking after growth has started.

Time to plant just about anything and everything! Harden off seedlings before you give them a space in your garden. Assume all seedlings you purchase today were living in an 80 degree greenhouse yesterday and transition them gently.

Watch the overnight lows and be prepared to protect tender transplants against sudden drops in temperature.

Smaller plants establish and transplant better than older ones, so go with the 4" tomato instead of the gallon. They'll catch up, don't worry.

Need to give your warm-weather crops a heat boost? Direct sow heat lovers like corn and squash under vented clear plastic or mini-bell cloches made from old milk jugs and rely on the increased temps to give you strong and early germination. Just be careful temperatures under a cloche don't get so hot that you cook your seeds or newly germinated seedlings!

In the Pacific Northwest, brassicas do very well as a year round crop. The important thing if direct sowing these crops is slug protection. Transplants can also fall victim to those mollusks, so be on the lookout (preferably at night, with a sharp pair of scissors in hand.) Broccoli, Cabbage (early types), Brussels sprouts, Cauliflower (early types), Collards, Kale and, Kohlrabi (spring types).

Scarlet runner beans: This fast-growing vine (it covers a trellis in two months) pumps out gorgeous, hummingbird-attractive blooms that develop into tasty young edible pods and shaggable beans later. Sow seeds 1 in. deep, 4 to 8 in. apart in full sun. Provide poles or trellis for support

Try growing herbs in pots, matching herb color to pot color for a totally sophisticated look. Chives and 'Genovese' basil, 'Argenteus' silver thyme and 'Dark Opal' basil are good choices.

Order and Plan

Even though you may be in the busiest part of the garden's spring season, keep planning for what you're going to do in the late summer and fall. You may wish to plant quick growing crops in succession.

Would you like your landscape to continue a color and texture show you started in spring and summer? Does your changing landscape need to hide the unsightly facade of your home or enhance a particularly beautiful spot in your yard? Perhaps you just want a fall garden to highlight some of the colors and plants unique to autumn, while filling in blank spots in flowerbeds as warm-weather plants die back. Spend some time thinking through how your garden design and plants should function in autumn, and what you hope to accomplish with your fall garden.

Keep it in the back of your head that many of the fall and winter crops like Brussels Sprouts and some of the long-season cabbages mature very slowly, and will need to be started in late June or early July to give you a satisfactory harvest.

Stock up. Make a list of fall necessities: bulbs, new bird feeders, bird seed and new trees and shrubs. If you can, start to prepare planting areas by marking them off and clearing out unwanted plants. If you want to relocate plants to make room for new trees and shrubs, wait until the fall when the weather is more conducive to transplanting.

Maintain

Take photos and copious notes: Relax, sit awhile, enjoy your garden and think about what you like, what you love and what you wish you could change. Jot it all down in your garden notebook and take lots of photos for reference. Reviewing a photo gives your eyes a different perspective – you're so used to seeing your garden, you don't realize what it really looks like. Give it a try - photos really do tell the truth about a garden.

Removing spent flowers: This helps plants put more energy into flowering again. Annuals, and repeat flowering shrubs and perennials will offer more color more often during the season if you deadhead.

Pick Veggies Clean: In the vegetable garden, keep repeat fruiting plants (like tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, okra and others) picked cleanly as the fruit ripens. Allowing fruit to become over-mature slows production, and may spell the end of the season for these plants.

Insert stakes for flop-prone perennials when plants are 6 inches high. Candidates include peony, heliopsis, summer garden phlox, or Shasta daisies. Plants will hide stakes as they grow.

If you have poor soil, dig in some type of controlled-release organic fertilizer into planting holes this month for anything you plant. This is especially helpful for annuals and perennials.

When direct sowing annuals or vegetables, you can work fertilizer into planting beds or wait until after plants are up and have been growing two weeks, then scratch fertilizer lightly into soil.

June

Fertilize:

Mid-summer is a good time to address fertilization in the landscape and garden. Yellowish leaves may signify an iron deficiency in an otherwise healthy plant (particularly in lawns and broad-leaf evergreens like gardenias, rhododendrons, azaleas, hollies and others). It is also time to feed hungry garden veggies like greens, tomatoes, peppers and others that may have been planted a month ago or more.

Plant dill and fennel in vegetable gardens and flower borders for an airy texture. The blooms attract beneficial insects, which can keep harmful insects in check. Allow plants to set seed and you'll be rewarded with volunteers next year.

Edge your planting beds with herbs. Chives, 'Spicy Globe' basil, tricolor sage, and parsley all make pretty edgings. Thyme forms a lovely ground-hugging mat that's ideal for front-of-the-border planting.

If your planting beds tend toward the moist side, tuck Mediterranean herbs -- rosemary, thyme, and lavender -- in unglazed terra-cotta containers. The porous pots keep roots on the dry side, so plants can thrive.

Plant your favorite heat-loving veggies this month. They include eggplant, hot and sweet peppers, tomatoes, melons, squash, beans, corn, and cucumbers. Direct-sow seeds or plant seedlings -- either will have your kitchen overflowing with great flavors later in summer.

Get tomatoes off to a solid start by backfilling extra-deep planting holes with nutrient sources. To the bottom of the hole, add a fish head -- this is an organic way to provide nitrogen and calcium. Next add a handful of bonemeal and three to four crushed eggshells -- both add calcium, which helps prevent blossom-end rot from being a problem later in the summer.