

October in the Garden

SALLY SCALERA

October will arrive tomorrow and thoughts of fall are natural, even if it doesn't feel like it yet.

Even though fall doesn't quite look the same as it does up north, at least summer is officially over. Read on for some ideas to spruce up your yard, especially after Hurricane Irma's visit.

Do you have plants in your yard that turned brown after Hurricane Irma's visit? Don't worry about your trees and shrubs because they should be just fine. The dead leaves (that were dried out by the strong, long lasting winds) will be shed and new foliage will be produced. Deciduous plants may not put out any new growth, since fall is almost here, but that doesn't mean that they were killed. Tender herbaceous perennials could have been killed which will be evident by the brown leaves attached to dark colored stems (that once were green.) For this month, just sit back and see what happens.

* This is the month that you can fertilize your lawn again now that the fertilizer ban has ended. If you haven't had a soil test done, you will need to apply a fertilizer without phosphorus. Phosphorus can only be applied if a soil test shows it is needed. Why not consider (for your soil, plants, and the IRL) using an organic lawn fertilizer. Organic fertilizers contain more water insoluble nitrogen (WIN) and less quick release nitrogen so there will be a minimal threat of the nitrogen leaching. Organic fertilizers are a food source for the soil microbes so the nutrients are released both slowly and in small amounts for the plants to absorb. It is best to apply fertilizer as early in October as possible because the shorter day's lead to reduced plant growth and uptake of nutrients.

* After broadcasting the fertilizer, be sure to immediately water it lightly. Apply approximately a quarter inch of water to take any quick release nitrogen down to the roots to be absorbed.

* With the soil, plants, and the IRL in mind, show your lawn some TLC by spraying it with liquid seaweed (i.e. Maxicrop, Neptune's Harvest, Liquid Kelp, etc.) using a hose-end sprayer. The more often the liquid seaweed is sprayed, even weekly, the more trace elements the plants can absorb.

* Do your lawn a favor and topdress it with a half-inch layer of organic matter this fall. The organic matter will increase the water and nutrient holding capacity of the soil.

* As the days continue to get shorter, the turf will be able to handle less frequent watering and mowing, as in every 10-14 days.

* If your flowering annuals are looking poorly, replace them with cool-season annuals such as; alyssum, calendula, chrysanthemum, dianthus, geranium (this perennial wants sun in the winter and shade in the summer), petunia, snapdragon, pansy, flowering tobacco, stock, and flowering kale.

* Don't prune poinsettias now so the colorful bracts can form.

* A few of the herbs that can be planted this month include; borage, chives, coriander, parsley, lavender, mint, rosemary, sage, sweet marjoram, lemon grass (I recommend planting it in a container), and thyme.

* Bulbs that can be added to the landscape include; Lily-of-the-Nile (*Agapanthus*), amaryllis, calla, crinum, Aztec lily (*Sprekelia*), Anemone, Society garlic (*Tulbaghia violacea*), Kaffir lily (*Clivia*), Walking iris (*Neomarica*), Narcissus, Iris (only our native Blue Flag irises or Louisiana (LA) hybrids), Watsonia (*Watsonia* spp.), Spider lily (*Hymenocallis* sp.), African iris (*Moraea* spp.), *Tritonia crocata* var. *mimata* and rain lily (*Zephyranthes* spp.).



A cherry laurel affected by Hurricane Irma. PHOTO BY SALLY SCALERA

* If you want to grow strawberries, the time to plant them is now. The optimum time to plant is through October 25th.

* Vegetables that can be planted in October include: arugula; beets; broccoli; Brussels sprouts; cabbage; Chinese cabbage; carrots & radishes (create your own seed tape using toilet paper and glue. Lay a ruler down the center of the toilet paper and at every inch place a drop of glue. Place a carrot seed on every other glue dot and then place a radish seed between each carrot seed); cauliflower; celery; collards; endive/escarole; kale; kohlrabi; lettuce (seed tape works well for lettuce seeds also); mustard; onions- bulbing, bunching (green & shallots); spinach; strawberries; Swiss chard and turnips.

* Vegetable seeds that can be sown in October for planting out in the garden in November are: arugula; beets; broccoli; Brussels sprouts; cabbage; cauliflower; Chinese cabbage; collards; endive/escarole; kale; kohlrabi; lettuce; mustard; English or snow peas; spinach; Swiss chard and turnips.

* Some of the fresh produce that could be available at produce stands or farmer's markets in October include; Avocado, Asian pear, atemoya, black-eyed peas, carambola, endive/escarole, guava, passion fruit, peanuts and persimmons. Be sure to check out the Brevard County Farmers Market held every Thursday from 3-6 p.m. at the Wickham Park Equestrian Center.

Sally Scalera is an urban horticulture agent and master gardener coordinator for the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences



Geranium wants sun in the winter and shade in the summer. PHOTO BY SALLY SCALERA



Create your own seed tape using toilet paper and glue. PHOTO BY SALLY SCALERA