



September Tips

TREES, SHRUBS and GROWDCOVERS

by Diane Relf, Extension Specialist, Environmental Horticulture

- Fall is a great time to plant and divide perennials and shrubs for next year's garden. By planting in the fall, your plants do not endure the stressful summer heat during establishment and have time to form sufficient root systems before the onset of winter dormancy.
- Don't let the fall pass you by with only the changing colors of the trees to enjoy! Look for fall annuals that are tolerant of cooler temperatures. Some suggestions are snapdragon, calendula, pansy, flowering cabbage and kale, stock, viola, dusty miller, and poppy.
- The perfect gift for the golden anniversary? Give the Golden Rain Tree, *Kouleuteria paniculata*, favored for its brilliant gold fall foliage show.
- High fertilization of *pyracantha*, an evergreen shrub, produces rampant growth that is susceptible to fireblight and reduces berry production.
- Give your perennials and woody ornamentals a fall check-up; look for weak or diseased plants.
- Eliminate plants that might infect or take energy from neighboring plants.
- If your landscape area is small, select diminutive cultivars of woody ornamentals. Look for Latin names that include "compacta" or "repandenus."
- Wait until deciduous trees and shrubs begin to drop their leaves before fertilizing them. This signals dormancy, when no new growth will be stimulated that might not harden off prior to cold temperatures. However, roots are active until soil temperature drops below 40 degrees F, so nutrients will be taken up and used by the plants to develop a stronger root system.
- To minimize the occurrence of black spot on roses, prune and remove infected areas. Be sure to destroy the clippings, as the disease will carry over from year to year.
- Many balled and burlapped trees and shrubs are now sold wrapped in synthetic burlap that will not rot in the ground, resulting in a root bound plant that doesn't grow well if the burlap is left in place. Some of this material strongly resembles cotton burlap; if in doubt about the burlap's makeup, cut it away from the root ball once the plant is in place.
- Select some accent plants for your landscape that will provide autumn color. Trees that turn red include dogwood, red maple, black gum, sweet gum, and red or scarlet oak. Shrubs with red fall foliage include viburnum, winged euonymus, and barberry.
- Allow plants to finish the summer growth cycle in a normal manner. Never encourage growth with heavy applications of fertilizer or excessive pruning at this time as plants will quickly delay their hardening process that has already begun in anticipation of winter several months ahead. New growth can be easily injured by an early freeze.
- Tree-wound paints used after pruning are no longer recommended because they can slow healing and may promote decay.
- If pesky seedlings of woody plants, such as elm or hackberry, are found growing in your hedge,

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remove them as soon as possible. If left too long, they will take over and leave gaps in the hedge when they are finally removed.

- Rake up leaves, twigs, and fruit from crabapple trees, and dispose of them in the trash to help control scab.
 - Water newly planted trees and shrubs to provide sufficient moisture and prevent winter damage. Add a 3-inch layer of organic mulch, such as shredded bark, around the base of plants to retain soil moisture and regulate soil temperature.
 - Stake and wire newly planted trees only if necessary. Use a piece of rubber hose around the guy wires to protect the trunk, and don't tie the tree tightly; it needs to be able to move a little in the wind. Remember to take the supports and stakes out in a few months once the tree is established.
 - Generally, it is best for amateur arborists not to move deciduous trees before their leaves fall.
 - Needle leaf or cone-bearing evergreens can be moved now if you want to transplant them. Move plants with an ample root ball.

Monthly Tips have been prepared since 1986 by various staff of the Office of Consumer Horticulture including Ellen Bennett, Michelle Buckstrup, Susan Day, Susan DeBolt, Sharon Dendy, Kate Dobbs, Sheri Dom, David Gravell, Virginia Nathan, Jenny Shuster, Ellen Silva, and Ruth Sorenson. Resource material for the development of this information includes the Virginia Master Gardener Handbook; Extension Publications and newsletters from VCE, numerous other states, and the USDA; and an extensive library of over 900 books, magazines and journals. Project funded by The Virginia Gardener Newsletter subscription fees. Diane Relf, Project Director and Content Specialist

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