

Garden Line - September 2010

by Brent Moon - HPARD Urban Garden Manager

Ahh, September, cooler temperatures, fall color ... oh, wait, that's right, we're in Houston. I thought I was back in my home state of Kentucky, where mid-late September usually brings a respite from the brutal temperatures and humidity. Not to fear, it won't be much longer before fall is here. In the meantime, here are some tips for your garden as summer winds down.

Many perennials can be divided this time of year, including iris, daylilies, cannas, hostas, etc. Dividing them now gives them plenty of time to get re-established before winter sets in. They will spend fall and winter regrowing roots, which will get them off to a good start next spring.



Mid-September is the time to get your wildflower seeds sown for a beautiful spring show. Wildflowers that do well in the Houston area include blue bonnet, Indian paint brush, Gaillardia, wine cup, phlox, poppies, and coreopsis, just to name a few. A great source for wildflower seeds is Wildseed Farms in Fredericksburg, TX. You can order from them online at www.wildseedfarms.com. There will be several opportunities to volunteer with HPARD staff and help sow wildflower seeds this month. If you are interested, go to www.houstonparks.org and look for the wildflower link.

Keep an eye out for Brown Patch in St. Augustine lawns this month, too. Treat with an approved fungicide, if necessary. As with most things, prevention in the first place is the best practice and the easiest way is to avoid watering late in the day, which allows the grass to remain wet all night and creates a friendly environment for the spores that cause Brown Patch. The better practice is to water early in the morning. That way the sun's rays will dry the grass before the fungus can get going.



Most pruning should be wrapped up this month, as well. Heavy pruning of trees or shrubs much later will only encourage soft, new growth that can easily be damaged by any cold weather we get this winter.

Switching over to the vegetable garden, mid-late September is the ideal time to get your transplants going for a winter garden. As much as I love my tomatoes, egg plants, and peppers, I really enjoy the winter garden more. The temperatures are much easier to deal with and I love a good salad that I picked just moments before from my garden.



If you haven't done so already, add 3-4 inches of good, aged compost to your garden and lightly till it in. If you don't have a tiller, you can easily work it in with a shovel, rake, or 4-tined pitch fork. Adding a bit of organic fertilizer of your choice is a good idea too.

Plants to consider for this time of year include a variety of lettuces, Swiss chards, spinach, broccoli, cabbage, kale, cauliflower, radish, carrots, bok choy, kohlrabi, turnips, collard greens, mustard greens, and many others. You can pick up many of these in affordable seed packets at your local garden store or nursery. If mail order is your thing and you

want more choices than you can shake a stick at, go to www.Johnnyseeds.com. They are very reliable and have an outstanding variety of seeds and garden-related products to choose from.