



Dear *Extension's Successful Gardener* E-tips Subscriber:

The drought continues. See tips below for dealing with the drought, and find more information at www.successfulgardener.org.

Upcoming Gift-giving Season

For the gardeners on your list, give a subscription to *Extension's Successful Gardener* newsletter. The magazine-quality newsletter is published 10 months per year (Jan/Feb and June/July are combined). The newsletter is chock-full of gardening information for North Carolina gardeners, and is written by North Carolina Cooperative Extension horticulture experts. Visit www.successfulgardener.org or call (919) 513-3112.

October Tips

- There is no need to fertilize grass that is dead, and currently there is not enough moisture to get more grass started. This could change if you are under a rainstorm or two, but most people will need to hold off planting cool-season grass until warmer temperatures in late winter or early spring.
- This is the best time of year to move plants but the dry soil is a problem. If possible, delay moving plants until November or later when water may be more plentiful. If you have to dig and transplant a plant, make sure you water the soil thoroughly to make digging possible. Then you will have to water the plant regularly in the new location, which may be a problem for those in areas with water restrictions.
- Bulbs that are typically planted in October can wait until November to go in the ground. Healthy bulbs from well-adapted plants can be planted in December or January. Some spring-flowering bulbs are good choices for our landscapes. In general, spring-flowering bulbs avoid the most drought-prone times of the year by going dormant in summer and early fall.
- If winter weeds such as chickweed are a problem, start watching for them to germinate and apply a broadleaf herbicide when they appear.

- In choosing a landscape, don't let this year's dry weather fool you into creating a desert landscape. Within the last four years we have also had very rainy weather. Create a landscape using tough plants. While they need to be plants that adapt to our growing conditions, they don't have to be native. Many of the introduced plants in our landscapes have tolerated both wet and dry conditions over the last four years.

Vegetable Gardens

- While the weather remains warm, it is time for cooler weather to show up. Be prepared to use season extenders on your garden by the end of the month. In weather patterns like this, a few hours of frost protection can sometime extend the growing season for 2 or 3 weeks.
- In the vegetable garden, insect control can be a challenge on fall-grown cabbage family crops. Fortunately, the best controls are organic. For aphids, use insecticidal soap. Don't miss the lower leaf surfaces. For cabbage worms and other caterpillars use weekly applications of *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt).
- Plant a cover crop in your vegetable garden. Legumes, such as clover and alfalfa, will enrich the soil by fixing nitrogen. Cover crops also prevent erosion and can be turned over into the soil to provide needed organic matter.

Fall Pumpkins

- Have you been pumpkin shopping yet? When you find a nice one, bring it home and dip it in a 10 percent bleach and water solution to kill the bacteria that encourages rot. Then, sit it where it will not touch the ground or concrete. A piece of cardboard can help. This should keep your pumpkin looking good for 2 to 3 months.

Fall Chores

- Don't be tempted to prune shrubs and trees now. Allow plants to fall into a dormant pattern so that they can survive the winter months.
- Be sure to rake up debris around and under rose bushes. Black spot disease can overwinter in fallen leaves and appear again next spring.
- As the leaves drop from deciduous plants throw away any diseased plant material. Do not put it in a compost pile. Leaving infected plant material on the plants or the ground provides a source of inoculum for next year's infection. Sanitation is the best method of disease control.
- Use shredded leaves as mulch. Fallen leaves from trees contain nutrients, but they decompose slowly. Help the process along by grinding up the leaves rather

than sending them to the dump. Don't have a shredder? Rake the leaves into rows and run over them with a mower, preferably one with a bagger attachment.

Ladybugs and Other Creatures, Beneficial and Otherwise

- Late October is ladybug season. These delightful beneficial insects can make a nuisance of themselves when they gather in large groups and choose your house as a warm spot to spend the winter. If beetles are finding their way into the house, it is time to check the condition of weather stripping and caulking around windows, doors, ceiling light fixtures and other possible entryways.
- If you identify an infestation of hemlock woolly adelgids on hemlock trees, fall is the best time to treat. Organic insecticidal soap or horticultural oil can be used on trees small enough to spray. For larger trees, a soil drench of a product containing imidacloprid is the best approach. For more information see: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/trees/note119a/note119a.htm>
- Although most of the hummingbirds have started heading south, you might want to leave feeders out for the late travelers as well as the occasional Rufus hummingbird that may visit in late fall.
- Keep pecans picked up. Pecan weevil larva for next year's populations will crawl out of the nuts and overwinter in the soil if nuts are not picked up.
- Check your houseplants for insects before bringing them indoors. A few insects on plants outside can easily turn into a problem inside. Wash leaves thoroughly and soak the soil in a bucket of water for 3 to 5 minutes to encourage any insects hiding in the soil to come out.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension

- Learn about educational programs near you. Visit www.ces.ncsu.edu.

Until next month, Happy Successful Gardening!

