



September Monthly Reminders

Introduction:

September in the garden is a special time. This month marks the end of monsoon season. The intense heat and humidity of summer is mostly past, and the mercury is beginning to fall, especially overnight. Now is a good time to clean up any monsoon damage from storms or wind and prepare your beds for new plants. Look forward to starting your fall vegetable crops as the temperatures begin to wane toward month's end. And do not forget to sit back and enjoy a cool evening breeze now and again while enjoying the fruits of your labor.

Maintenance

- Take the opportunity to clean up any monsoon damage.
- Discard split citrus and pomegranate fruit. Damaged fruit will attract fruit flies and other insects.
- Help plants recover from summer heat by pruning off dead and dried branches.
- Lightly prune roses and remove old or dead canes in mid-September. Remove spent blooms. Pick up and discard all cuttings as they can harbor insects and diseases.
- Deadhead spent blooms and prune back leggy plants.
- Pull weeds before they set seed.
- In garden beds, mix in a starter fertilizer containing both nitrogen and phosphorus before planting. (Refer to Ten Steps to a Successful Vegetable Garden AZ1435)
- As the sun begins to shift, relocate container plants to sunnier locations.
- Hose off susceptible plants that are dusty to control spider mites. (Refer Spider Mites, Backyard Gardener #195.)
- If you notice something that looks like bird droppings on citrus trees, it could be the orange dog caterpillar which matures into the giant swallowtail butterfly. These will not cause major damage to a mature plant, but you may wish to pick them off a younger plant.
- Divide iris beds every 3 to 4 years. (Refer to Bearded Iris, Backyard Gardener #154)

Planting

- Plant flowering bulbs such as amaryllis, narcissus, iris, rain lilies, and ranunculus. Choose a location with morning sun. Keep soil damp but not wet. Use mulch to hold in moisture. (Refer to It's Fall Bulb Planting Time, Backyard Gardener.)
- Vegetables and non-native annuals require enriched soil. (See reference documents for specific plants.)
- Sow seeds indoors for cilantro, chives, parsley, sage, thyme, and oregano. Winter herbs prefer sunshine and monthly feedings once transplanted into the garden.
- Sow seeds for carrots, radishes, spinach, lettuces, turnips, green onions, beets, chard directly into the garden by mid-month.
- Sow seeds or plant transplants of sweet peas, French marigold, snapdragon, lobelia and dianthus.
- Sow seeds of broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, brussels sprouts in trays to be transplanted next month.
- Plant strawberry plants where they will receive protection from afternoon sun.
- Plant deciduous fruit trees that do well in the desert, such as figs (Refer to Growing Common Figs in the Low Desert AZ1636) and pomegranates.
- If you prefer not to plant any fall veggies, consider planting cover crops like hairy vetch, annual rye, peas or clover which will help maintain your soil's porosity and even potentially fix nitrogen into depleted soil. (Refer to Cover Crops, Backyard Gardener #27)

Fertilizing

- September is the time to do the 3rd citrus feeding of lemons and limes, if you did not already do so in August. (Refer to AZ 1671-2015 Citrus Fertilization Chart for Arizona)
- Feed stone-fruit trees such as apricots, peaches, and plums in elevations over 3500'. These nutrients will be stored in the tree roots for use in the spring. For lower elevations, hold off on until spring.



- If you have roses, return to full-strength slow-release fertilizer this month.
- Fertilize beds of greens and herbs using a balanced fertilizer before planting.

Watering

- Adjust irrigation frequency based on the rains, maintain your summer schedule until temperatures drop.
- Continue to keep an eye on pomegranate and citrus trees for fruit splitting. This could be an indication of too much water for the former and/or sun-damaged rinds that cannot expand for the latter. It is important for these trees to have a consistent watering schedule.
- Monsoon rains are subsiding and now is a good time to consider adding passive and/or active rainwater harvesting.

For further information on the subjects this month, the Cooperative extension provides the following – as well a large number of bulletins and other documents.

- AZ 1162 Backyard Fruit Production at Elevations 3500 to 6000 Feet
Link: <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1162-2015.pdf>
- AZ 1636 Growing Common Figs in the Low Desert
Link: <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1636-2014.pdf>
- AZ 1492 Diagnosing Home Citrus Problems
Link: <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1492.pdf>
- AZ 1151-2021 Irrigating Citrus Trees
Link: <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1151-2021%20%282%29.pdf>
- AZ 1671-2015 Citrus Fertilization Chart for Arizona
Link: <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1671-2015.pdf>
- AZ 1435 Ten Steps to a Successful Vegetable Garden
Link: <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1435-2015.pdf>
- AZ 2061-2023 Growing Herbs In Tucson
Link: https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az2061-2023-%2008-28-23_0.pdf
- It's Fall Bulb Planting Time, Backyard Gardener
<https://cales.arizona.edu/yavapai/anr/hort/byg/archive/fallbulbplanting.html>
- Cover Crops, Backyard Gardener #27
Link: https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/attachment/CoverCrops_0.pdf
- Bearded Iris, Backyard Gardener #154
Link: <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/attachment/Iris-Bearded.pdf>
- Spider Mites, Backyard Gardener #195
Link: <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/attachment/SpiderMites.pdf>
- Giant Swallowtail, summer16_page8.pdf.
Link: https://cales.arizona.edu/backyards/sites/cales.arizona.edu/backyards/files/asset/document/summer16_page8.pdf
- AZ 1344 Harvesting Rainwater for Landscape Use. Link: <https://extension.arizona.edu/publication/harvesting-rainwater-landscape-use>
- AZ 1876-2021 Drought and Extreme Heat: Plant Responses and Landscape Maintenance Practices. Link: <https://extension.arizona.edu/publication/drought-and-extreme-heat-plant-responses-and-landscape-maintenance-practices>
- University of Arizona Cooperative Extension. Get to Know Your Monsoon.
Link: <https://extension.arizona.edu/get-to-know-your-monsoon>