

## October Gardening Tips

By Jason Reeves, Horticulturist and Curator at the University of Tennessee Gardens in Jackson.

Despite autumn's arrival, there is still plenty to do in the garden. For example, October is the preferred time to plant ornamental kale, Swiss chard and pansies. These are lovely additions to the fall and winter landscape, as well as being edible. Look for the winterbor and Russian kales as they are more reliable in cold weather than the kales known commonly as "flowering cabbage."

Here are more items for your "to do" list for the garden for the month. These tasks may not apply for everyone, but October is a good time to perform any of these tasks and they will enhance your landscape.

- Collect seed of any annuals you would like to grow again next year. Allow to dry completely before storing. A paper bag works great as a container that allows the seed to dry.
- There's still time to order bulbs, but be swift about it. Get them in the ground by early December.
- Before the first frost, dig up caladiums and shake off soil. Allow them to dry completely and store in a warm dry place for the winter.
- Now is a good time to plant trees and shrubs, since dormant plants will be under less stress. Newly installed deciduous plants require almost no watering during the winter months, but don't forget a thorough initial watering is paramount. Monitor evergreens such as junipers, hollies and arborvitae for watering needs if rain is sparse. Even in winter, a plant with leaves on it will transpire. Winter wind desiccation can hurt an evergreen tree that lacks sufficient moisture.
- Wash your pumpkins, gourds and winter squash in a mild bleach solution before displaying or storing to help prevent rot.
- Now is a good time to control broad-leaf weeds such as white clover and wild garlic in your lawn.
- Bring in your tropical and house plants before frost. Many plants don't like it when the temperatures drop into the 40s.
- After frost, cut back your deciduous herbaceous perennials. This helps lessen the chance of disease or insects overwintering in your beds. Perennials that are borderline hardy and may benefit from retaining their stems through the winter include hardy lantanas and salvias. Any tender plants such as cannas and elephant ears appreciate a layer of mulch for extra winter protection.
- Hardy perennials can be mulched with a thin layer of organic material, but keep the mulch away from the crown or it could hold too much moisture and rot the plant.
- Pick off any bagworms from your plants to help eliminate the eggs that will hatch next year. Dispose of them in the garbage and not the compost or they may survive and hatch.
- To make leaf removal less of a chore, rake them before they accumulate deeply. If you have a fescue lawn or moss garden it is even more important to keep the leaves removed. Compost or use them as mulch in your beds. You can also till them into your soil and by spring they will be composted. Leaves on the lawn can be chopped with the lawnmower and left in place if the debris is not too deep.